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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

NITU : A SYMBOLIC ANALYSIS OF AN AUSTRONESIAN SPIRIT CATEGORY

BY

ANDREA KATALIN MOLNAR

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Nitu**: A Symbolic Analysis Of An Austronesian Spirit Category submitted by Andrea Katalin Molnar in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides a comprehensive investigation into the widespread Austronesian spirit category, **nitu**. Based on an examination of ethnographic literature, the study demonstrates that **nitu** and its cognates have a wide distribution in the Austronesian speaking world, especially in Indonesia. With regard to its associated meanings, the category of **nitu** is also shown to constitute a polythetic class (Needham 1975).

Nitu is primarily conceived as the spirits or souls of the deceased, or of the ancestors as a collectivity; and secondarily as nature spirits. In both senses, the category is very closely associated with the concepts of 'source', 'origin', and 'continuity'. In various contexts, the **nitu** spirits can be regarded as the origin of humanity, the source of mortal life, and the means of both biological and social continuity. These spirits are connected with notions of cosmic order as well.

An examination of comparative material from mainland Southeast Asia, relating to non-Austronesian-speaking groups as well as to other Austronesian-speaking societies which do not possess the term **nitu** in their language, reveals the presence of spirit categories which are very similar to **nitu** structurally and/or substantively. In connection with the concepts of 'source', 'origin', and 'continuity', the Austronesian speakers possess structural as well as substantive similarities to **nitu** in their spirit beliefs, while non-Austronesian speakers show only substantive similarities. The difference between the linguistic groups is particularly manifest with respect to views of cosmic order.

The value of analyzing the category of **nitu** within a framework defined by the concepts 'source', 'origin', and 'continuity' is further demonstrated by considering a particular case for which detailed information exists, namely the Ngadha people of Central Flores, in eastern Indonesia. In this society, **nitu** (or **Nitu**) forms part of a dual conception of divinity. The Ngadha conception of divinity finds expression in social-political relations as well, particularly in positions of authority. By applying the analytical model of symbolic classification which Dumont (1986) calls 'hierarchical opposition', as well as the framework

provided by the concepts of 'source', 'origin', and continuity, the Ngadha case is shown to reveal a clear socio-cosmic dualism. In the light of this finding, moreover, Needham's (1960a) and King's (1980) hypothesis concerning concordance in social and symbolic order are critically examined and shown to be inadequate.

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CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I propose to show the relevance of the themes of origin, source, and continuity to the symbolic analysis of the widespread Austronesian category of **nitu** which is a reflex of the Proto-Austronesian reconstruction ***anitu** (Dempwolff 1938:15). **Nitu** is an old Austronesian word (Capell 1944:207-208) which generally refers to the spirits of the deceased; or more specifically, to collective ancestral spirits, or to nature spirits. I shall be concerned, therefore, with the conceptual category which is called **nitu**; or is designated by a term which is a cognate of **nitu**, such as **anito, aitu, antu**, and so on,[1] in various Austronesian societies. For the sake of convenience, I will use the term **nitu** throughout the thesis, even when I am referring to one of its cognates. As I will later demonstrate, I believe that the category of **nitu** is an aspect of what Fox (1988) has called "origin structures" in Indonesia, although one that does not exclusively concern systems of descent as in Fox's analysis. An analysis of the various expressions and idioms in which this concept appears in different Austronesian societies will demonstrate this extended symbolic relevance of **nitu**.

Nitu, identified as collective ancestral spirits, tend to be associated with life cycle rites; agricultural rites; and generally, with the idea that these spirits are the source of life and of continuity for their living descendants. As ancestral spirits, they are sometimes associated with the physical structure of a house, which is viewed as the origin of a family or descent group -- in certain respects a 'descent house' or 'lineage house'. **Nitu**, as nature spirits, tend to be identified with such physical materials of life as water sources, earth, wealth, amongst others. Thus, both as ancestors and as nature spirits, **nitu** can be regarded as the source of mortal life, the means of its continuity, and in certain respects the origin of humanity. I shall expand upon these topics in subsequent chapters.

Although the concept of **nitu** enjoys a broad distribution in Insular Southeast Asia, and in Oceania as well, it has not yet been dealt with in a comprehensive study.In analyzing

the concept of **nitu** I have relied on published ethnographies, both old and recent. Descriptions of categories of spirits called **nitu** were taken from the HRAF files; travellers' accounts; missionary accounts; and from ethnographies and essays prepared by professional anthropologists, in the German, Dutch, French, and English languages. Information on this term, however, is scattered throughout the literature, mostly in older works. Most of the ethnographies from this region, on the one hand, either provide a very brief description of the category **nitu** and the concepts and ideas associated with it, or merely mention the term and give a European language gloss for it. On the other hand, discussions of **nitu** in Indonesia, including Sulawesi, Borneo, Roti, Solor and Adonara, East Flores, and especially the Ngadha region of Flores, are quite extensive (see Downs 1956; Jensen 1974; Fox 1973; Arndt 1951; also Arndt 1930,1931, 1936,1937, 1954,1960a,1960b). The literature dealing with **nitu** is primarily descriptive in nature, with either very scant analysis; or, as is more frequently the case, no analysis at all. The single exception to this generalization is Fox's (1973) analysis of the Rotinese conception of **nitu**.

The most extensive account of **nitu** comes from Paul Arndt S.V.D., for over thirty years a Catholic missionary on Flores. Arndt provided numerous ethnographic descriptions of the various cultural and ethnic groups of Flores; and of the societies of Solor, Adonara, and Sumbawa. Despite the voluminous nature of his descriptions, however, Arndt's analyses of the religious systems of these regions, including the concept of **nitu**, is rather scant. His analytic framework can be traced back to the so-called 'Nature Myth School', which was founded on the works of Friedrich Max-Müller, the 'father' of comparative religion, and to his anthropological training in the tradition founded by Father Wilhelm Schmidt S.V.D. In Arndt's analysis of Ngadha religion the main emphasis lay in establishing the presence of a monotheistic God; or as he called it a 'High God'. This approach is in keeping with the anthropological tradition in which he was trained . In a similar vein, his attempt to assert similar interpretations for the representation of divinity to that of the Ngadha among

other Florinese groups may be traced back to the analytical framework of Father Schmidt, who belonged to the so-called KULTURKREIS school (Morris 1987:93,102). Arndt's analysis of the indigenous conceptions of the spirit world relied heavily upon an interpretation of different categories of spirits as personifications of the sun and moon. This approach is traceable to the framework of Friedrich Max-Müller, who viewed religion as a "Disease of Language" (Morris 1987:92-94). Max-Müller's stand was that the names of deities and spirits were originally nothing more than a personification of natural phenomenon, such as the sun, moon, and the stars; and that the original meaning of these names were forgotten and so transformed with the passage of time.

Since Arndt's analytical framework is now outmoded, the greatest value of his extensive compilations lies in the detailed descriptive information they contain about various aspects of social life. There has been a consistent tendency among anthropologists to discredit or marginalize previously written accounts by missionaries, travellers, administraters, or local authorities (Clifford 1986:117). I have no wish either to discredit or marginalize Arndt's contribution to eastern Indonesian ethnography. Had Arndt provided us simply with an analysis and brief descriptions of the religion of the various groups he wrote about, within the framework of Schmidt and Max-Müller, a comprehensive treatment for the category of **nitu** in these regions would not be possible. It is because of the richness of his descriptions of various aspects of ideology and social life that this category can be better understood. Furthermore, it is probable that Arndt's descriptive accounts recorded aspects of indigenous culture in various Florinese societies, and particularly among the Ngadha, which have possibly become extinct or transformed as a result of colonial contact, Christianization, and more recently by modernization. Thus I have found Arndt's contributions invaluable in facilitating my endeavor, especially since, as pointed out above, this thesis is necessarily based on library research rather than on fieldwork.

Having stated that Arndt's theoretical framework is now outmoded, I wish to consider some more current theoretical and methodological approaches which are relevant to analyzing symbolic categories such as **nitu**. The major theoretical approach to symbolism in social anthropology is represented by such anthropologists as Leach, Turner, and Douglas, whose writings reflect a particular interpretation of Durkheim's works (Morris 1987:301). Their approach tends to avoid any discussion of the seeming irrationality of religious beliefs, for they argue that these beliefs are to be interpreted as symbolic (ibid). This theoretical stand, furthermore, gives one aspect of the symbolic system priority, for it takes the social structure as the basis of various symbolic codes; or put in another way, it views symbolism as a system of meaning, and anchors the analysis of symbolism to social structure (ibid:224-225).

More recently, however, this approach has received much criticism from the so-called 'literalists'. Skorupski (1976), for example, argues for a literalist approach in analyzing "primitive" or traditional systems of thought and action. "Primitive" systems of thought and action are regarded by him as cosmologies, comparable to scientific theories, which emerge and persist as attempts to understand and control the natural world. Thus Skorupski does not view symbolic systems as making a statement about social organization, but instead as a system of knowledge which is comparable to scientific thought.

Sperber (1975) is another anthropologist who takes to task the symbolic approach of social anthropologists, but in a very different way. He argues that symbolism is best understood as a cognitive mechanism, and as a form of knowledge (Morris 1987:234-35). Thus he states that symbols are not paired with their interpretations in a code structure, and hence that their interpretations are not meaning (Sperber 1975:85). In his opinion, then, " symbolicity is not a property either of objects, or of facts, or of utterances, but of conceptual representations that describe or interpret them" (ibid:112). Sperber therefore views a symbolic system as a system of knowledge, as encyclopedic entries of categories which are

"neither about words nor about things, but about the memory of things" (ibid:108). He also argues that the anthropological theory of symbolism, as it has thus far been conceived, reduces to a reasoned classification of diverse cultural phenomena (ibid:147).

Another anthropologist who views the symbolic approach as reductionist is Talal Asad (1986:164). In particular, he is against the view that social concepts or meaning structure social reality; and he feels that social anthropologists incorrectly treat ideology as determining social structure (1979:613-14). He argues that the ultimate meaning of what the people of a culture say does not reside in society, which he regards as simply the cultural condition in which speakers act and are acted upon (Asad 1986:155).

This condemnation by the harshest critics of the symbolic approach is, however, not entirely warranted. Although they view them from different perspectives, both Skorupski and Sperber regard symbolic systems as systems of knowledge. Yet this position does not answer the question of why symbolic phenomena are often expressed in a complex and obscure discourse. Furthermore, in contrast to Asad's argument, social anthropologists do not always view ideology as something that determines social structure. This deterministic stand appears to be based on a misconception about the role and purpose of symbolic analysis. This misunderstanding may be the result of social anthropology's persistent focus on social organization, particularly with respect to descent and alliance (see, for example, Kuper 1988). The aim of the symbolic approach, as I see it, is, or should be, to discover and understand the structural principles which inform both the symbolic and social order of a society. Thus this is an approach which views symbols in relation to diverse cultural phenomena, and the goal is not to discover principles of ideology which determine social organization.

The approach of social anthropologists in the symbolic tradition may be briefly summarized by citing a passage in a recent ethnography by E.D. Lewis (1988:299):

> The analysis of systems of metaphor, especially in their social use, must attend both to the systems of social and symbolic classifications which metaphor expresses and to the group relations as they are manifested in social action. Metaphorical extension, the relation of substitution by means of which a symbol (either linguistic or iconic) given in a domain of meaning is transferred to and informs another, and the resulting complexity of meaning implies ideology. Ideology, the system of ideas by which the members of a community express and interpret social relations, governs the substitutions by which symbols are removed from one realm of meaning and reaggregated into another.

At this point we need to consider the more specific theoretical and methodological approaches which have had a direct affect on the study of Indonesian cultures. Approaches to Indonesian materials have been most significantly influenced by Dutch anthropologists, and more specifically by the group of scholars who followed the leadership of J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong.

In his 1935 inaugural speech, entitled "The Malay Archipelago as a Field of Ethnological Study", J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong pointed out that within Indonesia there appears to be a certain cultural homogeneity; and that at the core of this homogeneity lie particular structural principles. Thus he suggested that Indonesia may be treated as a 'Field of Ethnological (or Anthropological) Study', which in the words of J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong (1977:167-168) is defined as an area

> with a population whose culture appears to be sufficiently homogeneous and unique to form a separate object of ethnological study, and which at the same time apparently reveals sufficient local shades of differences to make internal comparative research worthwhile.

Indonesia as a Field of Anthropological Study was implemented as a programme of study by his students. Van Wouden (1968), in particular, identified a "structural core" consisting of a clan system, asymmetric connubium, and socio-cosmic dualism common to eastern Indonesia, which he used as a model for analyzing social structure.

The approach of recent anthropological inquiries in Indonesia, however, departs from this approach, in so far as these studies focus on the examination of "each society from within and in terms of its own social categories" (Fox 1980c:330), while at the same time being concerned with whether the 'Field of Anthropological Study' procedure can help in understanding features of the particular society under study, and whether the data obtained can shed light upon what constitutes the 'Field of Anthropological Study' (de Josselin de Jong 1984:viii). Yet a concern with at least two of the aspects of the "structural core" advocated by Van Wouden and de Josselin de Jong -- namely asymmetric connubium and socio-cosmic dualism – has continued to influence recent ethnographic research in Indonesia; and in particular, in eastern Indonesia. More specifically, I am referring to the fact that ethnographers have tended to analyze religious (or symbolic systems) in Indonesia in the context of systems of descent and marriage alliance; and more specifically, in the context of asymmetric connubium (de Josselin de Jong 1984).

In this connection, Needham's thesis concerning classification and social order is relevant. Needham advances the argument that a close concordance between symbolic and social order exists only in societies which have unilineal descent and asymmetric marriage alliance (1960a:105).[2] More specifically, he states that :

> In cognatic societies the relation of symbolic to social order may be indefinitive or minimal; in lineal systems the relationship may be discernible in a limited range of particulars but not commonly in a comprehensive manner; and in lineal systems with prescriptive affinal alliance there is usually a correspondence of structure between the two orders such that one may speak of a single scheme of classification under which both are subsumed (1973a: 111).

King (1980) extends this thesis to apply to cognatic societies. He arrives at the conclusion that there can be some agreement between social and symbolic order also in the cognatic

societies of Borneo; and that the correspondence that exists may be due to the stratification of these societies into the three ranks of nobles, commoners, and slaves.

In most studies on Indonesian societies, however, the general tendency has been to analyze such binary oppositions as sky and earth, male and female, and upperworld and lowerworld, and more generally the dual conception of the cosmos (totality) in a way that highlights the correspondence of these contrasts with the social categories of wife-giver and wife-taker in prescriptive marriage systems with unilineal descent. Yet, similar ideological concepts and instances of socio-cosmic dualism can also be found in societies with cognatic or ambilineal[3] descent systems that practice no form of asymmetric marriage alliance. Among the contributors to the volume entitled *UNITY IN DIVERSITY* (de Josselin de Jong 1984), Wolfgang Marshall raises this issue; and concludes that, so long as J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong's notion of "Indonesia as a Field of Anthropological Study" involves asymmetric connubium as a major component, no research based on this notion will be successful' (1984:86). If this assertion is correct, one must ask what other approach, or for that matter what other focus, can we use to explain the cultural unity and relative homogeneity expressed in symbolic systems within such a large area as Indonesia?

In a recent public lecture, Fox (1988:7), after arriving at the conclusion that "reliance on a notion of descent does not provide an altogether satisfactory concept for general comparison", offered a somewhat different approach to the analysis of the continuity found in Austronesian societies. He asked,

> whether there is something common to all Austronesian societies, which manifests itself in some societies as 'structures' which we label as 'descent', but in other societies manifests itself in structures that appear quite different (1988:7).

In this lecture Fox pointed out the significance of a recurrent theme of 'source' and 'origin' in Indonesian, and especially in eastern Indonesian societies, a theme which has been also emphasized in several recent ethnographies (see, for example, Barnes 1974;

Forth 1981; Traube 1986; Lewis 1988). He labelled the different configurations in which these appear as 'origin structures'. While discussing the notion of descent among the Weyewa (Sumba), Atoni and Mambai (Timor), Rotinese (Roti), Bugis, Makassarese, and Toraja (Sulawesi), Fox stressed the point that the concept of descent in the traditional anthropological sense may not have as much importance in social organization as the idea of common origin and source, which may find expression in the botanic idiom of a tree, or in a localized place such as an area of land or a house. Thus the emphasis appears to be on returning to or tracing back relations to the origin and source.

E.D. Lewis (1988), in a similar vein, focuses in his monograph, *People of the Source*, on the notion of 'source' as an organizing principle of the symbolic and social order of the Ata Tana 'Ai of central Flores, in eastern Indonesia. The Ata Tana 'Ai are very much interested in 'origins', particularly on ceremonial occasions, since it is by 'origins' that rights to land, clan affiliation, and rights in the ceremonial system are determined (Lewis 1988:45). The clans of the Tana 'Ai domains are related by a network of rights and obligations pertaining to the performance of certain ceremonies by which the deity is invoked and the essential relations between human beings, the earth, spirits, and the deity are reaffirmed (ibid:32). The ceremonial system is organized around the **tana pu'an**, 'the Source of the Domain', in whom is vested the authority over the earth and ritual, and whose presence defines paradigms of cosmological relationships and the contemporary order of relations (ibid:87). "Returning to the source" is also an important metaphor with respect to affinal alliance in Tana 'Ai (ibid:301-302, 309-310).

In a similar manner, Barnes (1979) traces the connection between the concepts of origin and source in regard to relationship terms used for grandfather, grandchild, ancestor, lord or master, wife-giver, and wife-taker in various Austronesian languages. He encourages Austronesian linguists to engage in further research which may aid us in the understanding of patterns of Austronesian thought.

Although both Fox and Barnes are primarily concerned with social organization in their discussion about 'origin' and 'source', I believe their arguments have further implications. I suggest that the concept of 'origin' or 'source', and the related notion of 'continuity', have significance for the analysis of religious systems (or symbolic order) in Indonesia. This idea is suggested by Lewis' (1988) recent study as well. Such an approach may aid us in the attempt to trace widespread patterns of Austronesian thought, and could possibly free us from undue reliance on traditional anthropological typologies relating to social organization.

In the course of this work I shall undertake a comprehensive treatment of the old Austronesian term **nitu** through an analysis of the available ethnographic literature. Thus in Chapter Two I will show that **nitu** and its cognates have a broad distribution in the Austronesian world, especially in Indonesia. The wide distribution of the cognates appears to reflect a unity which is not only lexical in nature but conceptual as well. I shall then demonstrate that **nitu** is a polythetic concept (Needham 1975), with a number of elements as its components which may occur in isolation, or in various combinations, throughout the archipelago.

Next, in Chapter Three, I propose to show the relevance of the themes of origin, source, and continuity for the analysis of concepts of **nitu** as these pertain to various representations and ideas found in different Indonesian groups. Among the various Austronesian societies, **nitu** is primarily conceived as the spirits or souls of the deceased or of the ancestors as a collectivity. As ancestors, they are the source and origin of their human, living descendants. Furthermore, they are in certain respects also the source of social order. The ancestors impose various punishments in the form of disease, death, and misfortune on those who breach social norms and sanctions; and on those who do not fulfil their hereditary obligations towards their forefathers by making offerings. Moreover, the blessing of the ancestors is required for the productivity of the fields and livestock, and for

human reproduction as well. In some instances the **nitu** are associated with life cycle rites. Thus, the continuity of humanity is intimately connected with **nitu**, as ancestors; and they are the source of life and continuity.

As I will show later, the **nitu** as ancestors and as nature spirits are structurally equivalent. Both are associated with physical expressions of 'source' and 'origin', and of 'life' itself. There is frequently a link between the **nitu** and water sources, rain, earth, and forests (e.g., in respect to hunting). Themes of fertility, well-being, and physical vitality are connected with these associations. There also appears to be a complex of ideas linked with **nitu**, springs, and gold; and thus with the theme of sources of material wealth. In this connection, it should be mentioned that in Indonesia material wealth usually consists of metal items (including gold), textiles, and livestock; and that in general these are also the items of exchange with respect to contracting a marriage.

In certain respects, the creative and destructive potential of **nitu**, particularly in connection with water sources and rain, is also implicit. This ambiguity in the nature of **nitu** is also evident in those classes of **nitu** (or **antu**, a Bornean cognate of **nitu**), that attack women in childbirth, emasculate men, or simply seduce and have sexual intercourse with a human partner of either sex, thus bringing destruction.

In Chapter Three, I will also examine some of the concrete expressions of the themes of 'source' and 'origin' in various societies as these relate to the the concept of **nitu**. Among certain Central Malayo-Polynesian speaking groups in eastern Indonesia, **nitu** are localized, in some way, to a site that can be viewed as a place of origin for a social group, or a source of well-being and continuity for humanity. Houses, villages, agricultural fields, and temples are some of these locations. In examining physical expressions of origin and continuity, and particularly in considering lineage houses as material expressions of 'origin', Lévi-Strauss's (1982) views on house societies, and Fox's (1980a) considerations of

the significance of the house in Indonesia, will also be taken into account, especially as these pertain to the house as an idiom or symbol of origins.

As a comparative exercise, in Chapter Four I will review literature on the **nat** and **phii** spirits of Burma and Thailand respectively; and on certain other ancestral or nature spirits from Rindi in eastern Sumba (Forth 1981), Kédang in Lembata (Barnes 1974), and from Borneo and Sulawesi, since these categories of spirits reveal structural or substantive similarities with **nitu.** Although **nat** and **phii** spirits are represented in very similar ways to **nitu,** and in some respects are associated with ancestors, guardian- and nature spirits, the extent to which they are connected with themes of 'origin' and 'source' appears to be quite limited. Furthermore, **nat** spirits (Spiro 1967) are mostly malevolently disposed towards humans; and thus are a source of discontinuity rather than continuity.

In contrast, various nature and/or ancestral spirits that form part of the religious systems of the Indonesian Islands of Sumba, Lembata, Borneo, and Sulawesi appear to be structurally and substantively very similar to **nitu** with respect to 'origin', 'source', and 'continuity', even though these classes of spiritual entities are not named with cognates of **nitu** in the languages of these societies.

The main ethnographic case I shall consider in Chapter Five is the concept of **nitu** found among the Ngadha people of central Flores, in eastern Indonesia. Not only is the description for this class of spirits the most extensive (see Arndt 1930, 1931, 1936, 1937, 1954, 1956, 1960a, 1960b, 1961), but **nitu** here forms part of a dual conception of divinity, which appears to be unique in the Indonesian context. In examining the concept of divinity among the Ngadha, I shall also look at their cosmology and ideas about the spirit realm in general.

In my analysis of the Ngadha material, in this Chapter and in Chapter Six as well, I will partly employ as a framework Dumont's (1970,1986) notion of hierarchical opposition. This approach contrasts with Needham's (1973) notion of dual symbolic classification,

particularly in connection with the analysis of socio-cosmic dualism, as it is expressed in the social and symbolic order. Briefly, Dumont (1970:66) defines hierarchical opposition as " the principle by which the elements of a whole are ranked in relation to the whole ". A hierarchical relation is an encompassing of the contrary; an opposition between a set and an element of this set (Dumont 1986:227). Dumont also emphasizes that the differentiation of an opposing pair of elements is not definable in itself but only in relation to the whole (1986:228). On the one hand, the superordinate element is identical to the set; yet on the other hand there is a contrariety (1986:227). Thus, distinction is important when considering the whole. The "hierarchical distinction unifies the data by welding together two dimensions of distinction – between levels and within a single level" (1986:231).

According to Dumont (1986:225), Needham in contrast suggests that man thinks by distinctions; and that the oppositions resulting from this fact form a system which leads to a 'binary classification' of the more or less homologous oppositions. Thus a polarity or complementarity essentially constitutes the indigenous 'symbolic system'. Dumont further charges that such a view of binary classification "uniformly confuses contexts or situations which may or may not be distinguished in the ideology under study " (1986:232).

I have found Dumont's framework more suitable for the analysis of the Ngadha symbolic and social order, since as will be shown, part-whole relations are prominent in the Ngadha conception of divinity and authority. The elements of the complementary and opposing pair **Nitu** (earth goddess) and **Déva** (creator / sky god) are not definable in themselves but only in relation to the whole, the totality of the Ngadha cosmos which is more closely identified with **Déva. Déva** thus appears to encompass **Nitu**, and so to stand for both itself and **Nitu .**

In Chapter Six I will explore some connections between the symbolic order and social-political relations among the Ngadha. Another reason for treating this Florinese group separately is that here we find expressions of socio-cosmic dualism in a society that has an

ambilineal[4] system of descent (that is, one in which a person can be incorporated into either the father's or the mother's group) and no system of marriage alliance. Thus, the Ngadha do not fit the models of either Needham or King mentioned earlier. Even so, there does appear to be a connection between the symbolic and social domains, at least as far as the distribution of authority is concerned. Thus, I will argue that the Ngadha case can be viewed as an exception to Needham's thesis.This group exhibits lineal tendencies in its descent system, although it does not practice asymmetric connubium. Asymmetric connubium does not appear to be necessary, therefore, for a close concordance between symbolic and social order, though in the Ngadha case certain features of the system of descent may be important in this respect. However, the system of descent in this case should be approached, I shall argue, from the perspective of 'origin structures'. Thus, an examination of the Ngadha data should provide a useful test of whether this system can be better understood with reference to ideas of origin and continuity, rather than with the traditional anthropological categories of descent and marriage alliance.

In summary, the thesis will deal with the Austronesian concept of **nitu** in connection with notions of 'origin', 'source', and 'continuity' in Indonesia, in the context of an analysis of the ethnographic literature. This work will provide not only a comprehensive treatment of the class of spirits called **nitu**, but also a possible extension of Fox's argument for 'origin structures', from the domain of descent, and thus social organization, to the symbolic or religious realm. Furthermore, in the context of this study, the relation between cosmology and aspects of social organization among the Ngadha will be explored.

CHAPTER TWO :

LINGUISTIC CONSIDERATIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF NITU

In this chapter I show that **nitu** is a reflex of an Austronesian term which enjoys a wide distribution throughout the insular world consisting of the Formosan, Philippine, and Indonesian islands, and also among certain Oceanic groups. The wide distribution of these cognates appear to form both a lexical and conceptual unity. I shall also demonstrate that **nitu** is a polythetic concept (Needham 1975), which is to say that not one of the elements of this category is the same among all the societies under examination. I will survey the various distributions and characteristic features associated with the concept of **nitu.** I shall further argue from linguistic evidence that **nitu** was and is an important concept in Austronesian religion, as evidenced by its survival in the religious ideology of the various subgroups of speakers of Austronesian languages.

I

The term **nitu** most commonly refers to the spirits of the deceased, or rather to the collective ancestral spirits as opposed to specific or lineal ancestral spirits; or to nature spirits. This is an old Austronesian word, and its cognates, (which include **anito, qanito, anitu, anito, onitu, sanitu, anite, aitu, antu, anitsch**), are widely distributed among various Austronesian speaking groups (Capell 1944:207-208). The cognates are all clearly reflexes of various Proto-Austronesian, Proto-Philippine, or Proto-Polynesian reconstructions. The Proto-Austronesian reconstruction given by Dempwolff (1938:15) is ***anitu,** ' separated soul, ancestral soul, ghost, demon'. Wurm and Wilson (1975), as well, provide us with lists of various Proto-Austronesian, Proto-Philippine, and Proto-Polynesian reconstructions of this term. In the following discussion, after each reconstruction I will indicate the linguist whose work Wurm and Wilson are citing with

respect to the reconstructed term. Wurm and Wilson (1975:89,197-198) cite the following Proto-Austronesian reconstructions: ***nitu** (Dempwolff 1929) and ***qantu(h)** (Dyen 1953a) which mean 'spirit' or 'soul', and ***hantu** (Dempwolff 1929), which is glossed as 'ghost'. The Proto-Philippine reconstructions provided by Wurm and Wilson (ibid) include ***qanitu**, 'spirit' or 'soul' (Zorc and Charles 1971), and ***qaNtu(h)**, 'ghost' (Zorc and Charles 1971). According to Wurm and Wilson (ibid) the Proto-Polynesian reconstruction is ***aitu**, 'spirit' or 'soul' (Dempwolff 1929). Reflexes of ***anitu** are found in (a) the Oceanic languages of the Marshall islands, Samoa, Rotuma, the Solomon islands and of Northwestern New Britain; (b) the Paiwanic languages of Formosa ; (c) the Western Malayo-Polynesian languages of the Philippines, the Chomorro of the Mariana islands, Borneo, Mentawai, and Sulawesi; and (d) the Central Malayo-Polynesian languages of Tanimbar, Kei, Seram, Sumba, Roti, Timor, Solor, Adonara, and Flores.

Before proceeding any further, it is useful to review the origin and spread of the Austronesian languages. Some linguists have argued that the homeland of Austronesian is the island of Formosa (Blust 1977,1980a; Foley 1980). The aboriginal languages of Formosa all belong to one of the two major branches of the Austronesian language family. They exhibit high internal diversity, forming several different groups. Foley (1980:78) concludes that since Formosa is adjacent to the southern China coast, where no Austronesian languages are now spoken, " ...the logical conclusion is that Formosa was the homeland of the Austronesian-speaking peoples ...". Ultimately, of course, Austronesian speakers had to come from the mainland. Benedict moreover has suggested a connection between Austronesian and the Thai-Kadai languages[1] of mainland Southeast Asia (Bellwood 1979:121). From Formosa, Austronesian speakers (Proto-Malayo-Polynesian) then migrated to the Indonesian archipelago and ultimately Oceania.

Bellwood, following Blust's linguistic work on Austronesian, has summarized the expansion of the Austronesian speakers as follows (1985:109,120-21). Around or before 4000

B.C. Initial Austronesians settled Formosa. Some Austronesians migrated towards the Philippines (Luzon) around 3000 B.C., and Proto-Austronesian underwent its first split, with the subgroup of Malayo-Polynesian emerging. These immigrants then spread through the Philippines, and around 2500 B.C. migrated into Borneo and Sulawesi. They then subsequently moved into Java, Sumatra, Malaya, and parts of Vietnam, bringing about a split in the Malayo-Polynesian group and forming the subgroup of Western Malayo-Polynesian. Other settlers moved south into the relative isolation of the Moluccas, founding the Central-Eastern Malayo-Polynesian subgroup. Further groups migrated into the Lesser Sunda islands. With this split the Central Malayo-Polynesian language subgroup established itself. Migration into Halmahera and West New Guinea resulted in the establishment of the Eastern Malayo-Polynesian subgroup. From here various populations spread eastward ultimately out into the Oceanic region; and, thus the Oceanic branch of Austronesian developed.

Foley (1980) postulates a similar expansion pattern. There was a migration from Formosa to the Philippines and to northern Borneo and northern Sulawesi. From northern Borneo one arc of migration occured to populate western Indonesia; and another arc moved from Sulawesi to settle parts of eastern Indonesia, the Moluccas, and Oceania. The expansion of the Austronesian languages is illustrated in Figure 1. which is taken from Bellwood (1985:108)

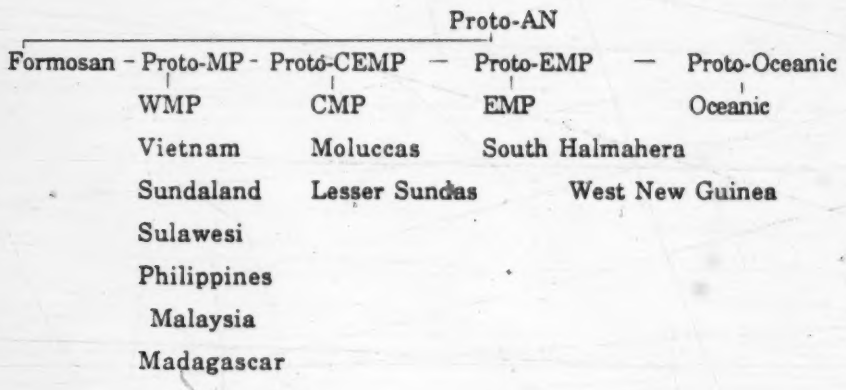
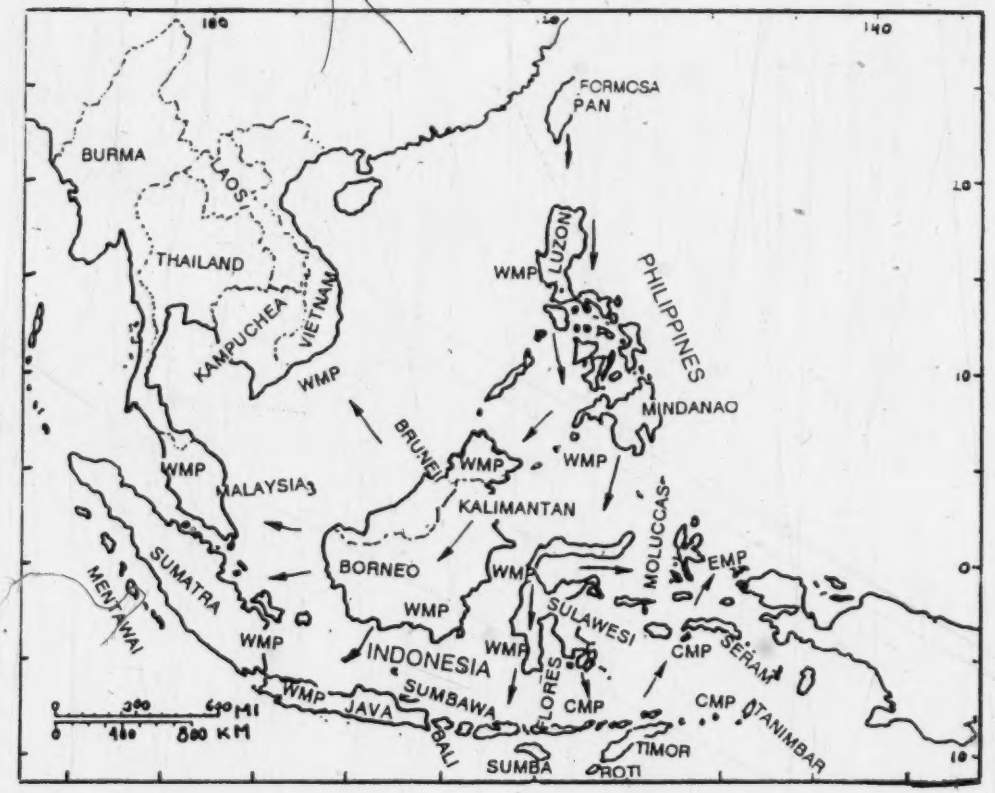
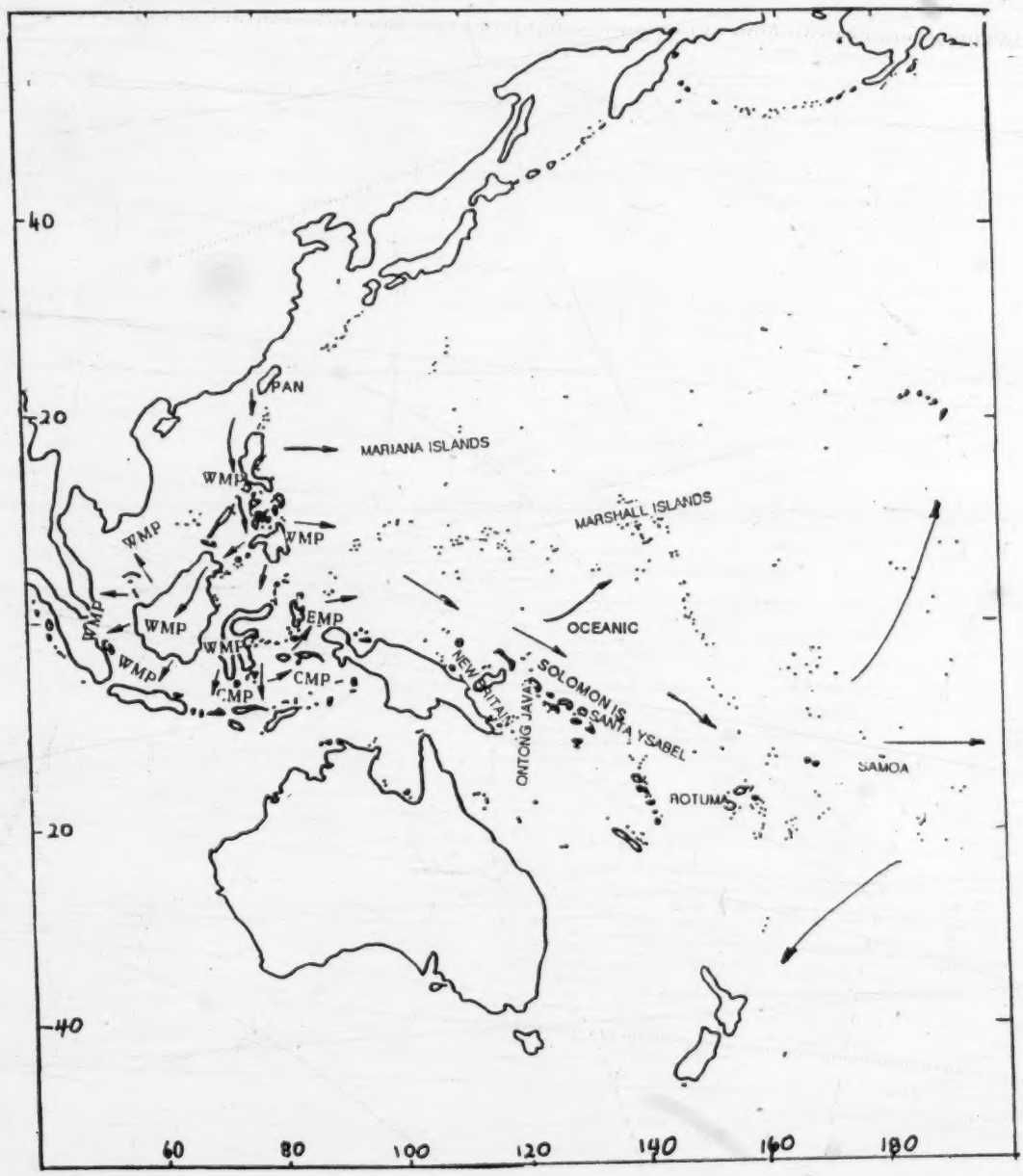


Figure I. Expansion of the Austronesian language family. AN=Austronesian, MP=Malayo-Polynesian, WMP=Western Malayo-Polynesian, CMP=Central Malayo-Polynesian, CEMP=Central-Eastern Malayo-Polynesian, EMP=Eastern Malayo-Polynesian. Sundaland refers to the western Indonesian islands, from Sumatra to Sumbawa.

The geographic expansion of the Austronesian speakers is further illustrated by Maps 1. and 2. which are taken and modified from Dutt (1985:3) and Walker and McIntire (1964:83) respectively.



MAP 1. The expansion of the Austronesian language family in Insular Southeast Asia. (taken and modified from Dutt 1985:3).



MAP 2. The expansion of the Austronesian language family in Oceacian (taken and modified from Walker and McIntire 1964:83).

As was pointed out earlier, cognates of **nitu** are found among Formosan, Western Malayo-Polynesian (WMP), Central Malayo-Polynesian (CMP), and Oceanic speakers. In the remainder of this chapter I shall use the foregoing abbreviations in referring to the western and central branches of Malayo-Polynesian. The cognates found among these groups are reflexes of Dempwolff's Proto-Austronesian reconstruction ***anitu** (Dempwolff 1938:15; Wurm and Wilson 1975). Since Formosa was postulated to be the homeland of PAN, it is significant that at least one group on this island still possesses a reflex of ***anitu** in its language. It should be noted, however, that there are several Formosan language groups, including Atalyalic, Tsouic, and Paiwanic, which are at the same level of classification as Malayo-Polynesian (Blust 1980b:208). The form of the various reflexes of ***anitu** (see Figure 2.) that I am considering in this Chapter, and the meanings of these, which I discuss below, have not changed significantly throughout the Austronesian expansion; that is, in the process of branching of the WMP, CMP, and Oceanic subgroups. It also should be noted that, as Figure 2. demonstrates, the morphology of the reflexes of ***anitu** shows consistency within the subgroups and a clear correspondence with the divergence of the subgroups of the Austronesian family.

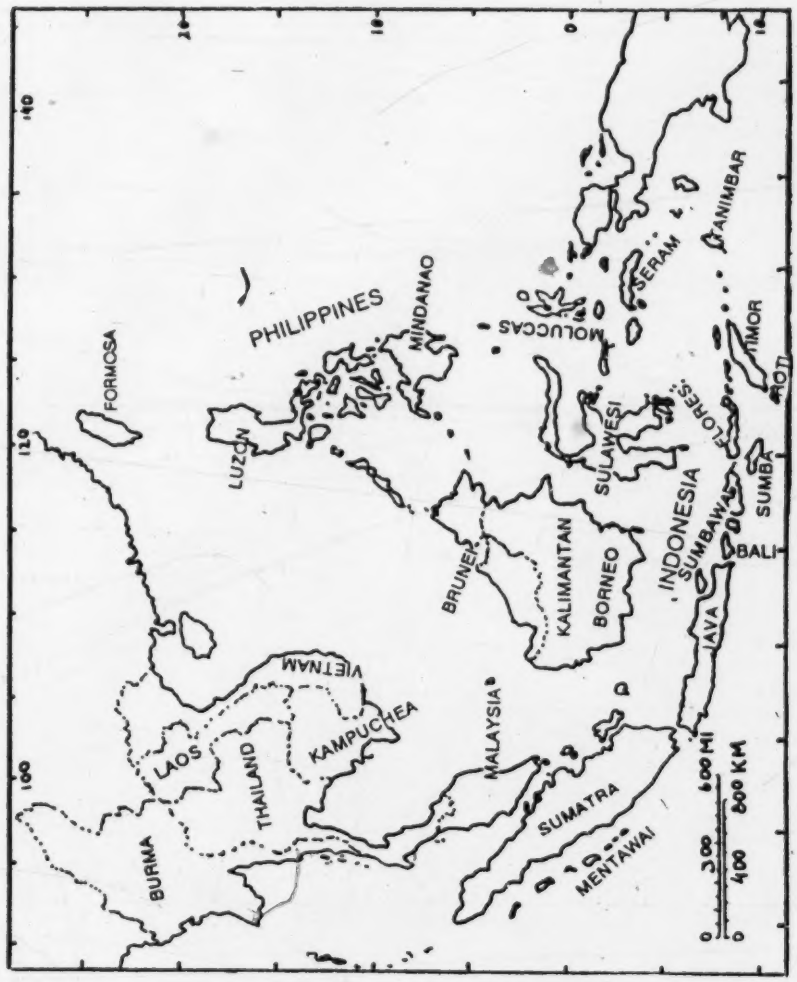
PAN *anitu

Formosa (Paiwanic)	WMP	CMP	Oceanic
qanito (Bunun)	Philippines : **anito**	Seram : **nitu**	Samoa : **aitu**
	anitu	Tanimbar:**nitu**	Solomon Is. : **nitu**
	(Yami) **anito**	Kei: **nitu**	Ontong Java: **aitu**
	Borneo: **antu**	Roti: **nitu**	Rotuma: **aitu**
	Sulawesi: **onitu**	Timor:**nitu**	Marshall Is.: **anitsch**
	anitu	Solor: **nitu**	NW. New Britain: **antu**
	Mentawai: **sanitu**	Adonara: **nitu**	
	Mariana Is.: **anite**	Flores: **nitu**	
	Malay: **hantu**		

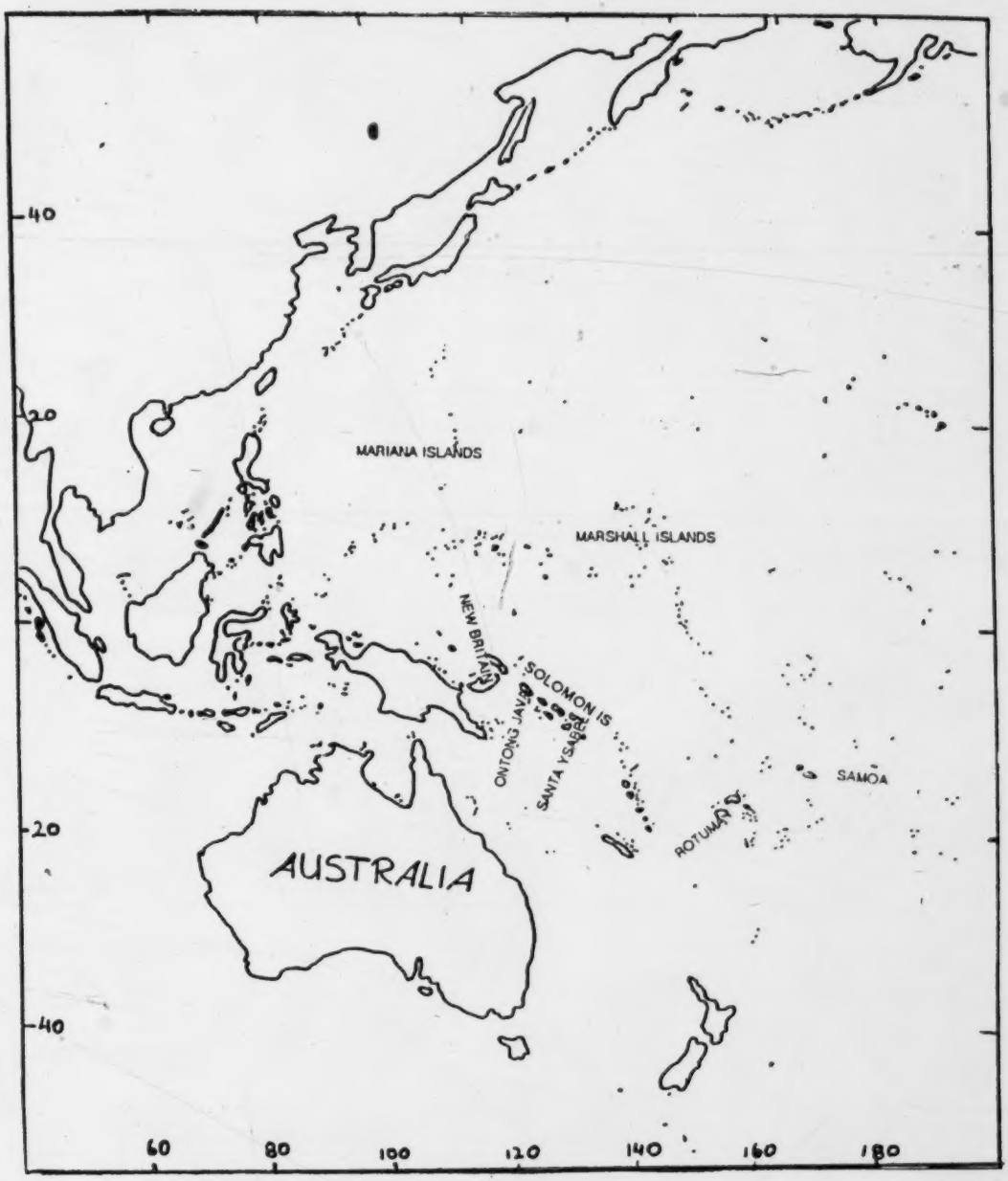
Figure 2. : The distribution of the reflexes of *anitu in the Formosan, WMP, CMP, and Oceanic branches of the Austronesian language family.

II

In this section I shall consider the distribution of the various reflexes of the PAN reconstruction ***anitu**, and the various characteristic meanings associated with these, on the islands of Formosa, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Oceania. Map 3., which is taken from Dutt (1985:3) and has been modified, illustrates the location of the islands of Insular Southeast Asia. Map 4. locates the islands that I discuss in Oceania (taken and modified from Walker and McIntire 1964::83).



Map 3. The Islands of Southeast Asia (taken and modified from Dutt 1985:3).



Map 4. The Islands of Oceania [with respect to cognates of ***nitu***] (taken and modified from Walker and McIntire 1964:83).

Formosa

The Bunun are Paiwanic speakers, who designate the malevolent spirits of the deceased, as well as the spirits of the living, as **qanito** (LeBar 1972b:137). When angered or mistreated, the latter will retaliate by causing illness, crop-failure, or lack of success in hunting, and other misfortune to the living. The retaliation may happen without the individual being aware that his spirit (or soul) has caused any harm; a concept which sounds similar to notions of witchcraft.

The Western Malayo-Polynesian Groups:

Philippines

The Yami group inhabits the island of Lanyu forty miles off the southern tip of Formosa. LeBar (1972b:108-113) tells us that the Yami speak a language which occupies a marginal and ambiguous position between the Paiwanic and Ivatan languages, Ivatan being related to Philippine languages. According to Blust (1989, pers. comm.), the Yami are Bashiic speakers, a group to which Ivatan belongs, so that this group is perhaps best considered along with the other Philippine groups. The Yami designate various classes of nature spirits, and the spirits of the recently deceased, as **anito**. The **anito** are the source of various diseases.

The term **anito** has a wide distribution among various groups inhabiting the Philippine islands of Luzon and Mindanao as well (Jocano 1969:9-10; LeBar 1972b:28-224; Silliman 1964:46-55,87,95). According to Silliman (1964: 46-55) among the Moros of Luzon, **anito** are ancestral spirits who function as the agents of the Creator God, and as such minister to the needs of their descendants.

In northern Luzon, among the Aeta, most spirits are called **anito**, and these are generally held to be benevolent towards humans. In certain respects they are nature spirits since they "own" property such as bamboo groves, game animals (deer and pigs), and

medicinal plants. Violation of their property or places where they reside precipitates misfortune and illness (LeBar 1972b:28). It is also interesting that female mediums among the Aeta are called **manganito**, and the curing séance is designated as **anituwan**.

The Mandaya of the Davao Gulf of Mindanao possess an elaborate hierarchy of spirits. They refer to all of these as **anito**. The coastal Bagobo of Mindanao also use the term **anito** to refer to "any of the deities in the aspect of communicating directly with mortals through the oracle of mediums" (LeBar 1972b:60). The **anito** are also said to communicate with humans through the calls of omen birds, especially that of a kind of dove, **limoken** (ibid).

For the Bontok of Luzon the most important spirits are the **anito**, here referring to the spirits of the dead, who lead parallel lives to humans. No important undertaking of their human descendants is conducted without first consulting with the **anito**. Again, answers are relayed by omen birds. **Anito** are conceived to be the primary agents of injury, illness, and death (ibid:85). The treatment of illness usually takes the form of exorcism, thus indicating that the **anito** cause injury or illness through possession. At death, the **anito** are invited to a family meal (ibid:86). The Lepanto of Luzon also designate the spirits of the deceased ancestors as **anito** (ibid:87). In this society great emphasis is placed on funerary ceremonies that ensure the welfare of the soul in the "house of the **anito**"; that is, in the land of the dead (ibid).

The Kalinga of Luzon refer to the spirits of deceased ancestors as **anito**, and make offerings to them at funerals (ibid:95). The Itneg (Luzon) generally call named deities and spirits **anito** (ibid:97), while the Apayo (Luzon) similarly designate most spirits as **anito**. Formerly the Apayo propitiated the **anito** by offering them enemy heads, which nowadays are replaced with dog heads (ibid:100). Those **anito** that are believed to be the "ghosts of bad people" annoy the living, and are fended off by magical means (ibid). Some of the spirits that were formerly human can achieve **anito** status, yet not all souls of the dead (**kaduduva**) can achieve this status (ibid). Among the Pagan Gaddang (Luzon) supernatural power is referred to as **anitu**; and this is thought to reside in certain objects,

called **unting**. These objects are hung in the house to consecrate it, and become the center of household rituals (ibid:102).

It seems therefore that in the Philippines, the term **anito** is used to refer to spirits in general, which may include nature spirits, as among the Aeta and Bagobo, and the spirits of the dead, as among the Bontok, Lepanto, Kalinga, and Apayo. The spirits of the deceased appear to be regarded as collective ancestral spirits as opposed to specific or named ancestral spirits. **Anito** in general are regarded as the sources of injury, illness and death; and the means by which they inflict death and sickness may take the form of possession. Even so, the **anito** also appear to be the source of success in human undertakings. Furthermore, as ancestral spirits, they play an important role in funerary rites by providing for the successful transition and the well-being of the soul in the realm of the **anito**. Among the Pagan Gaddang **anito** are generally associated with the house. Here **unting**, objects which possess **anitu**, supernatural power, are the foci of household rites that ensure the continued welfare of the residents. These rites, which secure the continuity of the household include life cycle rites, curing rituals, and agricultural rites, all or which are the affairs of the household (LeBar 1972b:102). The performance of these **anitu** rites and the number of times they are performed throughout an individual's life secures not only his social status but his health and good fortune as well.

Among the Apayo at least, the **anito** were also connected with head-hunting, a practice that ensured the welfare of the community. Later on, I shall discuss the connection between head-hunting and the theme of continuity as this pertains to the concept of **nitu** in Indonesia. The head in an Indonesian context is generally connected with the notion of 'source' (Freeman 1979:243). Thus, as I discuss in Chapter Three, **anito** are connected with notions of 'origin' and 'source' in several senses, in their identification with ancestors and in their association with life cycle, agricultural, and head-hunting rites.

Malaysia

In the Malay language the cognate term of **nitu** is **hantu** (Dempwolff 1938:15); and it refers to free spirits, that is, spirits that are not tied to a physical body (Endicott 1970:52). That part of the soul of men which remains on earth after death is said to become a ghost, which is simply one kind of spirit, **hantu** (ibid:17). There are several different types of ghosts, including **hantu bungkus**, a bundle of white cloth believed to be a corpse in its shroud (ibid:54), which is also 'somehow related to the spirits of women dying in childbirth' whose proper form is that of a cat (ibid:75); **hantu mati di bunoh**, spirits of murdered men (ibid:55); and **hantu dagok**, spirits of murdered men who take the form of peculiar clouds (ibid:74). The **hantu mati di bunoh** are also thought to be a source of magical power for those courageous enough to contact them in the prescribed manner (ibid:73-74). They are also said to reproduce like humans, and sometimes with humans (ibid:55).

The Malay, furthermore, believe that the oldest **hantu** are those which dominate the land, water, and jungle (ibid:100). These spirits, therefore, may be regarded as nature spirits. Among these belong the **hantu raya**, 'spirits of the jungle', **hantu tanah**, 'earth spirits', and the **hantu laut**, 'the spirits of the sea' (ibid:100,54). The earth spirits may intrude in man's life in a harmful way at almost any time, while the jungle spirits usually stay in the jungle unless they are summoned by medicine men in healing rites (ibid:106). It is for this reason that houses are built on stilts, which serve as a buffer between men and the earth spirits. The **hantu tanah** are also said to dwell in trees which are considered to be especially infested with spirits (ibid:107). The tiger spirits of the jungle are called **hantu belian**. These are familiar spirits of shamans (ibid:16-17). Endicott (1970:17) suggests that these are the ghosts of shamans, since '**blian**', an old Indonesian word, means shaman. The **hantu belian** are thought to pass from village to jungle, and to change from human to tiger form by passing a body of water (ibid:136).

The **hantu** in general are characterized by the lack of a body and by being often invisible, though it is said that they can be smelled, heard, or even felt (ibid:53). They may take a visible form, however; and while many types have a characteristic appearance, their form can usually be varied at will. Endicott (ibid:101,103,106) mentions three particular forms associated with the oldest **hantu** that dominate the jungle and water -- namely the giant crab which is linked with the sea; the tiger which is a jungle spirit ; and the crocodile which is a river spirit. The **hantu** can also change size with equal facility (ibid:53). The majority of these spirits are regarded as utterly non-moral. It is also said that lime is distasteful to the **hantu**, and that this is a substance which will keep them away (ibid:140). The **hantu** are said to be able to invade a person's body, causing illness; or to possess a shaman, and thus to serve him as a 'control spirit' in helping to evict a malevolent spirit (ibid:97). In some circumstances they are further said to devour their victim's soul substance, the vital principle (ibid:53).

Borneo

The concept of **nitu** is also present among the Iban and the Land Dayaks of Borneo (Jensen 1974:95,100-103; Sather 1978:311-355, 1988:171,175-178; LeBar 1972a:196). The cognate term among these groups is **antu**, and from the foregoing discussion it is evident that this term is closely related to the Malay **hantu.** The Iban refer to malevolent spirits as **antu**, which according to Jensen (1974:95) are those spirits of the deceased that met an accidental or "bad" death, which is to say an unnatural death, or of those that have received inadequate treatment at or after death. "Bad" death refers to death owing to an accident, such as drowning or falling out of a tree; to violent deaths, such as those owing to hunting mishaps or war; or to death in childbirth. There also exists a belief in a certain kind of **antu** that can metamorphose into voluptuous women who emasculate men. These are thought to be the spirits of women who died in childbirth, **antu koklir** (Jensen 1974:95; Sather 1978:311-355). They attack the sexual organs of men which they hold directly

responsible for their untimely demise. According to Richards (1981:166), **koklir** or **kokelir** are manifest in the cry of the fish owl, which calls -- 'kok-kok'. Thus, there is an association between this bird of prey and this kind of **antu**.

The Iban also believe in the existence of various nature spirits, including those of water sources and forests, which they designate as **antu** (Sather 1978:311-355). These can assume the physical form of humans, monkeys, deer, leopards, bearcats, monitor lizards, river turtles, eels and other aquatic animals, and snakes. The **antu buyu** belong to this group of spirits. They are said to attack women and possess them, and thus cause the demise of any offspring they might produce after such possession (ibid). According to Jensen (1974:95), the **antu buyu** can assume the appearance of snakes or orangutans. They are described as hairy and ferocious; and possessing a gigantic stature.

Antu in general are believed by Iban to be agents of disease and death, so that in this connection they appear to be sources of physical discontinuity. However, in certain respects the **antu** are associated with notions of continuity as well. In connection with head-hunting, the trophy head is called **antu pala** (Freeman 1979:234). The elaborate head-hunting rites focus on the theme of the head being the source of continued fecundity of the rice fields, which nourish humanity and thus secure its continuity in the physical sense. The fertility of the fields tends also to be symbolically linked with the fertility of humans among various Indonesian groups.[2] I shall later return to the significance of the head in connection with notions of source, as these pertain to the concept of **nitu** elsewhere in Indonesia. In Borneo, the **antu** are associated with life and continuity in yet another sense. Thus the **antu ai**, or river spirits, play a significant role in a child's first bathing ritual, **meri' anak mandi** (Sather 1988:157-187), a life cycle rite which I discuss in Chapter Three.

In contrast to the Iban, the Land Dayak call numerous terrestrial spirits **antu**. These spirits are generally malevolently disposed towards mankind, and are the primary agents of most illnesses (LeBar 1972a:196). Geddes's account (1957:14,79-81) is somewhat

different from LeBar's in that he describes **antu** among the Land Dayak as 'demons' or 'giants'.

Here, according to Geddes, the **antu** are conceived to be creatures like men and not spirits, especially in the sense that they are not immortal, invulnerable, insubstantial, or other-worldly (ibid:15). These 'demons' are generally malevolent towards human beings. The **antu** are believed to have superhuman strength; and in their dealings with humans can become invisible or change their shape, especially to that of fierce animals of the jungle (ibid:14). Thus the **antu** are associated with the general fear of the jungle. Some of the 'demons' are thought to appear as seductresses, "who lure men into love and then consume the means by which they express it" (ibid:14). This representation of the **antu** has a clear similarity to that of the **antu koklir** of the Iban. According to Geddes (ibid:15), however, humans can protect themselves from the malevolence of these 'demons'. The Land Dayak believe that since the **antu** are essentially like men, they would have their own fears and dislikes; and therefore men can protect themselves from the **antu** by the use of particularly potent charms, spells, and incense. The Land Dayak believe, furthermore, that the 'demons' may be tricked and outsmarted (ibid:79-81). Despite their differences, however, both Geddes and LeBar indicate that there are no beneficial **antu** among the Land Dayaks.

In Borneo, then, we again find that the cognate term of **nitu**, namely **antu**, generally refers both to the spirits of the deceased and to nature spirits. The themes of source and continuity appear in connection with head-hunting and life cycle rites. The ambiguous nature of the **antu** becomes evident in the fact that they both destroy and protect life. Thus, the emasculation of men and the attacking of women which causes the deaths of foetuses and newborn infants clearly negate the continuity of life.

Sulawesi

In Sulawesi (formerly known as Celebes) cognates of **nitu** are also found among the Mori-Laki and the Bare'e speaking Toraja groups. Among the Mori-Laki group **onitu**

refers to that part of the human soul which continues to exist after death, but has not yet arrived at the land of the dead (Rasser 1926-28:168). The term is further applied to both malevolent and benevolent spirits, and to the slaves who watch over the corpse during mortuary rites (LeBar 1972a:141; Rasser 1926-28:168). Among the Bare'e, in contrast, **anitu** designates a distinct group of ancestors, who are of great positive importance as guardians and protectors (Downs 1956:32).

According to Downs (1956:32), the Bare'e speaking Toraja call the spirits in the village temple and in the smithy, **anitu ri lobo** and **anitu ri kolowo** respectively. The former refers to the souls of heroes killed in battle, those who distinguished themselves by their courage and fighting skills during their lives. It also refers to the village founders. Furthermore, all individuals who had an influence upon the life of the clan are included among the **anitu**. These **anitu** function as guardians of the village. Downs (1956:32) describes them as follows:

> They lived under the roof of the temple in the bundle of arenge leaves (**towugi**) ceremonially deposited there by the head hunters on their return from a raid, and for this reason a small poisonous snake (**ule alo**) that lived there was thought to be an incarnation of the **anitu** and was never killed. An alternate name for these ancestors was **pue ri wumbu**, "Lord under the ridge".[3]

The **anitu** are also thought to possess people, and thus cause them illness (ibid:52,103,105). The **anitu ri kolowo**, the spirits associated with the smithy, are summoned in curing rites to restore health and to increase the productivity of the rice fields (ibid:99). The **anitu** were closely associated with the head-hunting practices of the Bare'e speaking Toraja. They had to be fed with scalps and heads of the enemy; otherwise they would "eat" the people, or strike the warriors and their relatives with their swords and make them ill (ibid:59).

We see therefore that in these parts of Sulawesi, the **anitu** or **onitu** are spirits of the deceased. They are associated with head-hunting, snakes, village founders, and the physical structure of the village temple. **Anitu** are the source of well-being and continuity of life, in that they ensure the productivity of the rice fields. However, they are also the sources of discontinuity in the context of notions of illness and death. It is of comparative interest that the **anitu** are not only associated with head-hunting, but that their physical form is a snake. In the context of Iban (Borneo) head-hunting, snakes also figure prominently (Freeman 1979:240).

Mentawai and the Marianas Islands of Oceania

On the Mentawai islands, which are located southwest of Sumatra in western Indonesia, the cognate of **nitu** is **sanitu** (de Josselin de Jong 1933-34:189,191). The malevolent spirits of the deceased are generally referred to as **sanitu**. Further information on the term **sanitu** is lacking in the ethnographic literature.

The Chomorro of the Marianas islands of Micronesia, east of the Philippines, are also WMP speakers. They designate the spirits of the dead as **anite** (Nevermann, Petri, and Worms 1968:69). **Anite** is evidently a reflex of the Proto-Austronesian ***anitu**. The **anite** are consulted by the shaman concerning causes of illness and such cyclical affairs as the weather, harvest, and fishing. Thus, the **anite** are believed to affect directly the everyday life, continued existence, and survival of the Chomorro.

The Central Malayo-Polynesian Groups:

Seram (Moluccas) and Wetar

According to Rasser (1926-28:187), in the Central Malayo-Polynesian language of Seram, the souls of the dead are called **nitu**. Moss (1925:61) also mentions that in the Moluccas in general, the "true soul", that is, souls of the deceased, are called **nitu** or **anitu**.

Nitu are connected with ancestor worship (Rasser 1926-28:187). There exists a hierarchy of **nitu** spirits, access being the easiest and most direct to the **nitu** of the family.

For southeastern Seram, there is further information about the category of **nitu** among the Wemale. According to Jensen (1948:88192), this category entails a number of representations, including that of the superior being of the domain, **Nitu haulu** or **Nitu elake**; the goddess of the dead, **Mulua Satene**; and the spirits of the dead who are also called **Iola**.

Nitu haulu, the Great **Nitu**, is connected with the men's cult. This spirit is described as a monstrous snake which feeds on humans. The Wemale believe that in ancient times this snake was fed numerous human sacrifices in return for which the men received red and yellow 'scales' that are likened to flowers (ibid:88,103). Red and yellow flowers therefore play an important role in the rituals of the domain and play a role in head-hunting as well; and women may not wear or possess them. Here head-hunting is regarded as the means by which fertility is secured for humanity and the fields; and is connected with the myth about a mythical ancestress, Hainuwele, from whose body parts all crop plants have originated (ibid:253). The **Tankole** house, which is a cult house located outside the settlement, is the place where priests can contact **Nitu haulu**, the supreme being of the domain. Again, women can only enter this house if they are in great need, and as a last resort.

The Great **Nitu** also plays a role in the Wemale boys' puberty rites (ibid:97-101). The initiands undergo tattooing, which according to myth was originally carried out by the tooth of the **Nitu** snake (ibid:97). The bamboo-trumpet which is used in the puberty rituals, furthermore, is believed to sound the voice of **Nitu** (ibid:100). During the period of seclusion (after which the boys re-enter society as adults) the initiands either remain in the men's cult house or in the forest. The entrance of this house is decorated with carvings of crocodile and snake jaws (ibid:100). Once the boys enter, it is actually said that they have been swallowed by **Nitu haulu**. In places where the boys spend their seclusion in the forest, as opposed to the cult house, the same expression is used in referring to the fate of the

initiands. Thus one could say that it is the **Great Nitu** which transforms the boys into adults.The initiands are believed to fight a war with the spirits of the dead, and thus receive the wounds that qualify them for adulthood; and to commune and visit with the spirits of the dead, who are also referred to as **Nitu**, although they are generally called **Iola** (ibid:99-100).

Mulua Satene is another representation of **nitu** among the Wemale.This spirit is regarded as the ruler of the dead. She is associated with plants, death, fertility, and the moon (ibid:120). In ancient times she is believed to have been the ruler of the living as well as of the dead. **Satene** is thought to have created order and law for the world (ibid:157). These laws and this order, however, were not strictly created for humanity but for the entire world, so that it can be said that she created the cosmic order. She embodies both death and fertility (ibid:157), as is implicit in two connected Wemale beliefs. First, the spirits of the dead are believed to find their new home with her on the Saluhue mountain in southern Seram. Secondly, it is thought that when a spirit of a dead person comes to **Satene** she gives birth to the spirit of a child, which she sends to earth in order for it to take the place of the deceased (ibid:155-156). She is also regarded as the creator of animals and spirits, since those spirits of the dead that do not pass the difficult task of going through the door to the world of **Satene** become these animals and spirits (ibid:116,158) This door is also likened by the Wemale to the jaws of the Great **Nitu** snake.

The Wemale call the spirits of the dead **Iola** but also refer to them as **nitu** (ibid:166). The spirits of the deceased are believed to help their descendants as though they were orphaned children. When the living encounter material and life-threatening difficulties and they can find nobody to turn to for help, they seek the assistance of the most immediate ancestor (ibid:193-194). It is usually the spirit of the dead mother who will provide the help needed. The living descendant generally receives a powerful item -- a stone, a ring, or a rooster -- that enables the individual to get what he needs. The spirits of the dead are not easy to contact, however, since they are said to be guarded by several dogs.The Wemale believe that the spirits of the dead live like the living but cannot reproduce (ibid:196). The **Iola**

generally assume the form of snakes in the land of the dead. The relationship between the dead and the living is characterized as one of love and respect (ibid:193-195). If the **Iola** are forgotten, however, they are believed to capture the soul of a living descendant and thus cause illness. Hence, after they are given an offering they release the soul and the individual recovers (ibid:195)

There is little available about the **nitu** concept on Wetar. According to J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong (1947:130), the Wetarese refer to a 'ghost' or a 'witch' as **nitu**. Unfortunately, this is the full extent of the information provided by de Josselin de Jong on the term **nitu** on this island.

The Kei islands and Tanebar-Evav

The spirits of the deceased are again called **nitu** on Kei (LeBar 1972a:115). According to Barraud (1979:231-233), on Tanebar-Evav, also one of the Kei islands, the term for spirits is **mitu**. **Mitu** appears to be a cognate of **nitu**, as regards both the form and meaning of the term. Furthermore, the spirits of the genealogical ancestors are called **nit**, of whom the **duad nit**, the ancestors of wife-givers, are the most important. The term **nit** is glossed as 'corpse' and 'the dead' (Barraud 1979:260), while the term **duad** means 'god' or 'divinity' (ibid:164). Again, **nit** would appear to be related to **nitu**.

Mitu on Tanebar-Evav are conceived to be the spirits that are intermediaries between the Creator God and men. They include the guardians of the village, of each house, of the **ub** and **wadar**. **Ub** and **wadar** are ceramic and plaited containers respectively. The latter kind of **mitu** are also called **ub-wadar** or **wadar-mitu**. The most important **mitu** are those named spirits that are associated with the village, the spirits called Labul, Limwad, and Larmedan. The first two are foreign to the island, while the latter is autochthonous and is connected with the millet cult. The fourth most important **mitu** is Lev, the **mitu** of the "navel of the island", who is considered to be both a spirit and an ancestor (ibid:233). These four **mitu** are conceived to be the guardians of the internal organization of the village. **Mitu**

in general exercise punitive functions against violators of social norms. The **mitu** punish by capturing the soul of the transgressor and hiding it in a container (ibid:231). The **nit**, who are the dead of the house and of the village, are collectively called **duad kabav**, "the gods of below", as opposed to the **duad-karatat**, "the god of above", the god of the "sun-moon". The divinity associated with the sky is also called by the conjoined terms for sun and moon.

Mitu and **nit** are thus two different categories of spirits, the former being free spirits while the latter are spirits of the deceased. **Mitu** are connected with rites and offerings that ensure the agricultural success of the village and thus the collective well-being of the village. The **nit**, in contrast, are sources of genealogical continuity and of generative power. The collective reference to the **nit** as "the gods of below" also suggests an association with the earth as opposed to the sky, which is associated with the "the god of above". Since earth and sky are generally viewed as feminine and masculine entities in Indonesian societies, the **nit** may thus be considered collectively as standing in opposition to the masculine deity.

Tanimbar

On Tanimbar, **nitu** refers to the spirits of the dead. After death, the **smangat**, or 'soul', transforms into a spirit, **nitu**, which travels to the land of the dead (LeBar 1972a:114). These spirits of the ancestors, specified as **nitu mangmwate**, are the most important of the benevolent spirits; and can be called upon by the family at life cycle ceremonies. The individuals who have the ability to communicate with spirits are called **manganitu** (ibid; Howes 1988:102). In this connection, we might recall the earlier mentioned term for the Aeta (Philippine) medium, namely **manganito**. This similarity is quite interesting, since the Aeta are WMP speakers while the Tanimbarese are CMP speakers. The land of the dead on Tanimbar is thought to be on an island called **Nus' Nitu** (Howes, ibid.).

Roti

On this CMP-speaking island, **nitu** refers to spirits in general. The two categories of **nitu** include the **nitu nai dalek**, the benevolent ancestral spirits; and the **nitu nai deak**, those spirits of the deceased who did not die naturally, but died of an accidental, violent, or untimely death, which is also referred to as a "bad" death (Fox 1973). Rasser (1926-28:177-178) categorizes the **nitu** on Roti into three groups. These are the **nitu uma**, the spirits of members of the house who have recently died; the **nitu mula**, the spirits of the long deceased who became a type of deity; and the **nitu dea**, the spirits originating from those who died outside the house.

The **nitu nai dalek** are also called **nitu uma**, the 'spirits of the house'. They are also designated as **nitu bei-bä**, "the spirits of (the male and female) ancestors" (Fox 1973:346). These are the spirits of individuals who have died a "good" or natural death. They protect their descendants, but if neglected cause illness. The **nitu nai dalek** mediate between humans and the rest of the spirit world. They are invoked in all rites, since success in any undertaking is dependent on them. These **nitu** of the house are described as having human form, hovering, lacking heels, and walking on toes. They are regarded as "a class of named ancestral spirits who are seen as the guardians of the house" (ibid:349).

The **nitu nai deak** (or **nitu dea**, according to Rasser) are thought to be a group of odd malevolent spirits of the outside (Fox 1973:343). These are the spirits of the bush, the forest, the sea, and especially of crossroads. They are a class of unnamed spirits conceived to be the dark creatures of the night who frighten and "blacken" [4]. The **nitu nai deak** are the spirits of those individuals who died a 'bad' death. They are described as inverted creatures that travel upside down with hands on the ground and feet in the air. In a variety of ways they behave in an opposite manner from humans. The **nitu deak** are the principal agents of death, misfortune, and all illnesses.

The **buntiana**, related to the Malay **pontianak**, are classified among these malevolent spirits. They are one of the most feared of the **nitu deak**. The **buntiana** are said to attack

women in childbirth and thus cause their death. They may assume the appearance of an owl. Fox (1973:354) also remarks that there is a close association between **nitu kak** and the **buntiana. Nitu kak** can also take the form of a beautiful woman who is so inverted that her teeth line her vagina. In this way she seduces men and emasculates them. There are both male and female **buntiana** or **nitu kak.** The male **nitu kak** attacks the human female in child birth and in general causes all manner of illnesses, while the female seduces mortal men (Fox 1973:354).

Sumba

The term **nitu** is present on Sumba; however, it refers to the sandalwood tree (Onvlee 1984:320, S.V. **nitu**). Since this tree is associated with 'magical' powers and therefore should be treated with caution and care (ibid), there may have been a link between **nitu** spirits, which elsewhere inhabit trees in general and the sandalwood tree in particular. Such a connection, however, is not clearly attested at the present.

Timor

The Atoni of western Timor call ancestral spirits **nitu** (LeBar 1972a:105). Schulte Nordholt (1971:146) mentions the **Pah nitu,** which are nature spirits that inhabit springs, rocks, and trees. Since **pah** means 'earth' (Schulte Nordholt 1971:146), **pah nitu** can be literally glossed as 'spirits of the earth'. Before trees are felled a sacrifice is offered to the nature spirits (ibid:425). The similarity of names thus indicates a connection between the nature spirits and the ancestral spirits among the Atoni.The dead are thought to continue their existence as **nitu** (ibid:150), who include both ancestors and those individuals who were killed in head-hunting raids. The ancestral **nitu** are said to rise from the grave at night and dance. These ancestral spirits should be avoided, since they are believed to be malevolent towards the living. Even so, the **nitu** are invoked during mortuary and all life

cycle rites in order to ensure a good harvest (ibid:152). In this regard, therefore, the life cycle of humans appears to be connected with the agricultural cycle.

Head-hunting raids are also connected with the **nitu**, but not in the same way as among some of the Western Malayo-Polynesian speaking peoples described earlier. I shall discuss this in more detail in Chapter Three.

Solor and Adonara

On these eastern Indonesian islands the term **nitu** refers to nature spirits that inhabit tall trees, massive rocks, springs, and other water sources, as well as holes in the ground (Arndt 1951:31-168; LeBar 1972a:94). The **nitu** are believed to originate from the earth or from the mountains. They are very closely associated with water. The rain is thought to be their urine or tears (Arndt 1951:167,203).

In general, **nitu** assume the form of snakes. When one sees a snake in the vicinity of the various abodes of the **nitu**, it is forbidden to speak to, laugh at, play with, throw something at, or to kill this snake. Such misbehavior is believed to precipitate illness, death, or other catastrophes, such as a flood (ibid:167)[5]. Any disturbance of the **nitu** on their property is thought to result invariably in illness for the trespasser.

Nitu can also assume the appearance of humans, sometimes that of small children (ibid:166). When appearing as humans, they are usually dressed in expensive and intricately decorated clothing. In this form, either as male or female, the **nitu** try to take humans as spouses by seducing them. Such marriages generally end in the illness of the human participant (ibid:165,168,175).

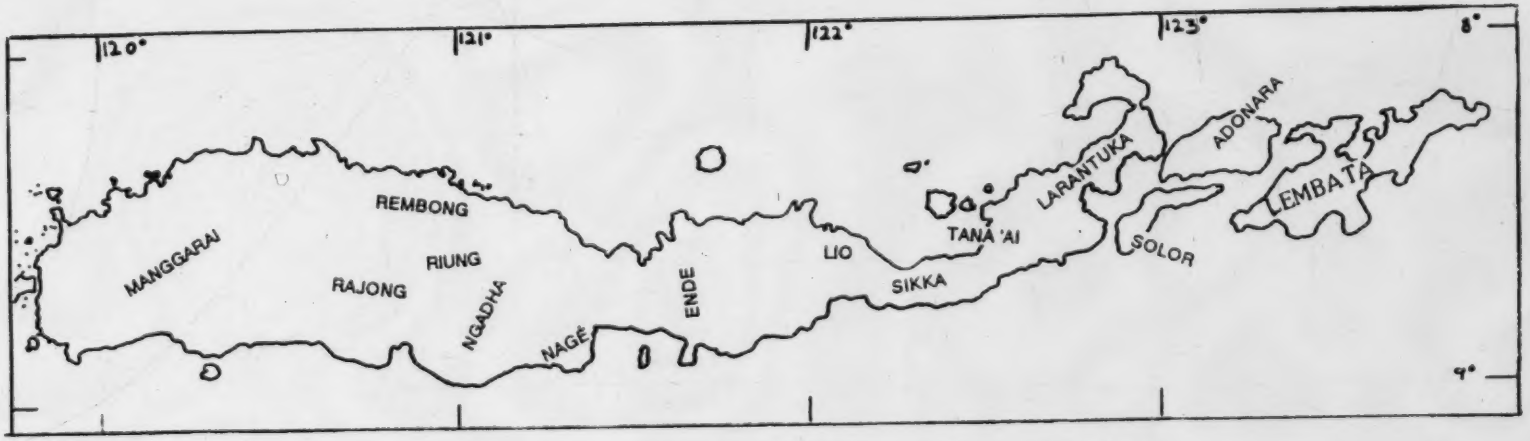
According to Jacobsen (1896:56), in the Solor region the souls of the dead roam around as **nitu**. They try to bring harm to the living, and to pull them down to the land of the dead. Thus again the **nitu** are the spirits of the dead, and there is a connection between nature spirits and the spirits of the dead.

The association of **nitu** with water sources, rain, earth and snakes relates to the themes of 'source', 'origin', and 'continuity', upon which I shall expand in the following chapter. Again the association of **nitu** with discontinuity is suggested by the human-spirit marriage that results in the human partner's illness. This latter association with **nitu** appears to be a further variation on the theme of discontinuity in connection with the already mentioned Iban **antu koklir** and the Rotinese **nitu kak**.

Flores: East Flores, Sikka, Ende, Lio, Ngadha, Nagé, Riung, Manggarai

Since the representation and distribution of the category of **nitu** on the island of Flores not only have relevance for this Chapter, but also constitute a rather major part of the data for the analysis in Chapter Three, it is useful to make a few points here regarding the internal unity and variation found among the populations inhabiting this island. Flores may be divided into three major regions: i) western Flores, consisting of the region of Manggarai; ii) central Flores, which includes the regions from Ngadha to Ende; and iii) eastern Flores, consisting of the Sikka and Larantuka regions (LeBar 1972a:80). This division of Flores is illustrated in Map 5. which has been modified from van Wouden (1968:189).

Linguistically, the Manggarai and Ngada-Ende regions belong to the Bima-Sumba group (H. I. Geertz 1963:29; LeBar 1972a:ibid), whereas the eastern regions of Flores belong to the Solor group of the Ambon-Timor languages (ibid). Eastern Flores is related to the Solor group culturally as well as linguistically. With the exception of most of Manggarai, we find the term **nitu** in all the regions of Flores. We also encounter the term in the eastern parts of Manggarai, in Rajong and Rembong (Erb 1987). It should be noted, however, that Rajong and Rembong seem to be continuous with the Riung region (ibid), which in turn is closely related culturally and linguistically to the Ngadha region (Arndt 1935). With regard to ideas about **nitu**, it should be noted that Central Flores and Eastern



Map. 5. The Island of Flores (taken and modified from van Wouden 1968:189).

Flores are very similar, despite the fact that these regions belong to different linguistic subgroups. In contrast, the Manggarai and Sumbanese, who belong to the same language group as the Central Florinese, that is, the Bima-Sumba group, do not even have the term **nitu** as a reference to spirits. As the discussion below will show, a conceptual unity and continuity is indicated across Flores with respect to the category of **nitu**. The regional variation we encounter is minor, and we find large areas of overlap in the representation of this spirit class. Thus there appears to be a good deal of cultural unity on this island.

The social organization of the various Florinese populations appears to indicate mostly minor variations as well. From Manggarai to eastern Flores, with the exception of Ngadha and Tana 'Ai, we find that patrilineal descent and asymmetric marriage alliance are the basis for social organization (LeBar 1972a:82,87,89,93). In contrast, however, in Tana 'Ai descent is matrilineal though here too asymmetric marriage alliance is present (Lewis 1988: 188, 218). The Ngadha, on the other hand, possess a cognatic system with segmentary descent groups; and practice no form of marriage alliance (Barnes 1980:110). As I will show below and in Chapter Five, the Ngadha appear to be unique with respect to one of the representations of **nitu**, as a female earth deity, as well.

East Flores:

In eastern Flores, as on Solor and Adonara, the **nitu** are conceived as nature spirits -- spirits of the earth, mountains, clouds, deep forests, high trees, fields, big stones, and water (Arndt 1951:22-69; Vatter 1932). They are generally thought of as being malevolent towards humans. According to Vatter (1932:89), the **nitung**, which is evidently a variant of **nitu**, are thought to be benevolent nature spirits that inhabit the earth and huge banyan trees. The Ili Mandiri of eastern Flores make offerings to the **nitung** before preparing and planting the fields, since the earth is believed to be their home and the fertility of the crops is dependent of them (ibid:102,110).

Invasion of their abode results in various misfortunes. The **nitu** are thought to capture or withhold the soul of the trespasser, and thus to cause him illness. It is forbidden to speak at water sources, in order not to attract the attention of the **nitu** (Arndt 1951:25). However, if left alone, the **nitu** leave humans in peace; and they may even help them (ibid:26).The **nitu** usually assume the form of snakes near their dwellings. Mocking, laughing at ,or playing with these reptiles is thought to precipitate earthquakes or floods as punishment (ibid:25-27; and see footnote 4).

In order to punish intruders on their territory, the **nitu** may also assume a human form. In particular, they appear as a relative of the violator and offer him or her food or drink, the acceptance and consumption of which results in death for the male partner or the impregnation of the female participant (ibid:21-24; Jacobsen 1896:56). I shall deal with this topic in more detail in Chapter Three.

Rain, rainbow,[6] and thunder are among the natural phenomena associated with the **nitu**. The rainbow is thought to be their valuables or treasures hung out to dry. The site where the rainbow joins the earth is the entrance to the abode of the **nitu**, and thus marks the location of their home. Rain is associated with their urine (Arndt 1951:58). Thunder is conceived to be their cannonball.[7]

The **nitu** are believed to lead their lives just as humans do, including engaging in feasting (ibid:22). Their domestic fowl are all sorts of wild birds, and their slaves are the wild pigs (ibid:58,68).[8] It is a common theme among the Ngadha and Nagé and elsewhere as well, that wild animals are the domestic animals of the spirits .

Among the east Florinese there does not appear to be a connection between the spirits of the deceased and the **nitu**. All the same, we do find associations with water, rain, earth, and snakes which are connected with notions of source and origins, as I shall explain in the next chapter. In this connection, we also encounter another configuration of symbols, in ideas linked with rainbow-treasure-snake and **nitu**. This complex again is connected with the theme of source (see Barnes 1974), as I will discuss later on. The theme of

impregnation of the human female by a **nitu** spirit which brings about destruction of life is also present among the eastern Florinese, and the destructive aspect of **nitu** is further implicit in their mode of punishment -- destruction by flood or earthquake.

Sikka:

The Sikkanese refer to the ancestral spirits or souls of the dead as **nitu** (Arndt 1932:155-159). Lewis (n.d.:601) also provides the following translation for **nitu** in Sikkanese: 'soul, spirit of the dead' and 'ghost of the dead'. The **nitu** are said to originate from those individuals for whom the circumstances of death are known, as opposed to those individuals for whom the circumstances are unknown (Arndt 1932).[9] The **nitu** are also called **blupur geté**, the great elders. In addition, it is believed that the souls of people who were malevolently disposed in life (such as the **ata uéng**, witches), become **nitu**. The **nitu** are generally associated with the underworld and the earth. They cause crop-failure, illness, and misfortune to humans and their livestock when their descendants forget them (ibid; Jacobsen 1896:55).

The **nitu** may assume the appearance of humans; and as humans they are said to be white, with long beards and great stature. The **nitu** may appear in dreams and teach humans about practical skills, such as trade and agriculture. In their own habitat, within the earth, the **nitu** take the forms of snakes (Arndt 1932:202).

The **nitu** are also thought to make their homes in stones and trees (Metzner 1982:115). These trees are usually part of a sacred forest. In these forests, offerings are made to **nitu** in order to request rain. Disturbance of the **nitu** in these forests precipitates illness or death for the violator (Arndt 1932:202). The **tana pengang**, the savannah, is also viewed as the property and home of the **nitu**. If these areas are cultivated and if the harvest is rich, one or more members of the cultivator's family will die (ibid:203). The **lihan tahong**, bamboo grove or bush, is yet another abode of these spirits. Cutting down bamboo from this area causes storms and subsequent destruction which does not cease until the **nitu** are appeased

(ibid). The choosing of fields for cultivation, and the prosperity and protection of the agricultural fields, is also believed to be dependent on the **nitu.** Offerings are made to them at various stages of the agricultural cycle in order to ensure the success of the productivity of the fields (ibid:216,218,221,226,229).

Further information about the category of **nitu** in the Sikka region comes from the domain of Tana 'Ai (Lewis, in press:3). Here the category of **nitu** entails two representations of spirits, namely that of **nitu noang** and **nitu maten**. The **nitu noang** are "the spirits of the deep forests and are the guardians of the waters and the mountain peaks of Tana 'Ai, which are areas of primary forest" (ibid). These spirits are furthermore associated with wild animals. Some also believe that the **nitu noang** are the aboriginal inhabitants of the valley who were forced into the inaccessible forests and mountain peaks by the ancestors of the people of Tana 'Ai. The **nitu noang** are regarded as immediate agents of illness which is inflicted on human beings as a malicious act of retribution.

The **nitu maten**, the spirits of people who have recently died, are also believed to inflict illness on humanity. They cause illness, however, unintentionally and simply by communicating their "heat" to those who encounter them, so that before the performance of the secondary mortuary rituals these spirits are believed to be potentially dangerous to the living. The **nitu maten** are therefore banished from the houses and gardens, which are ritually cooled. The people of Tana 'Ai believe that the **nitu maten** are disoriented and confused about their place in the world during this liminal phase before the final mortuary rites, and hence are potentially dangerous to the living.

Ende:

In the Ende region, the much feared, malevolent nature spirits are called **nitu pai** (van Suchtelen 1921:141-142). The **nitu pai** make their homes in trees, air, and water. They are the primary agents of illness. Smallpox is particularly attributed to them. These spirits enjoy much veneration, and sacrifices are offered to them at several sacrificial posts

erected for this purpose. Liana surrounding a settlement serve as protection against the **nitu pai**, as it forms a boundary between humans and these spirits. If an individual encounters a **nitu pai**, or believes that this may have happened, a sacrifice must be made as a protective measure. The Endenese do not identify ancestral spirits with **nitu**.

Lio:

The concept of **nitu** is also present among the Lionese. **Nitu** are thought to be a type of or an agent of **Duá Nggaé**, the Creator deity (Arndt 1939,1944). They are said to inhabit hills, mountains, and great trees -- thus they are nature spirits in general. Arndt (1944:179,180), in certain instances, translates the Lionese expression **nitu pai** as 'guardian spirits'. The spirits of the dead are, however, called **dua bapu**, and not **nitu** in this region (Arndt 1944:179,180). It would appear,therefore, that among the Lio the **nitu** are not identified with the spirits of the deceased.

Among the Lio, the power of the **nitu** is said to come from **Duá Nggaé**; and therefore they must be venerated in the same manner. The **nitu pai**, the nature spirits, are given offerings to obtain rain and to promote the fertility of the fields. Illness and disease are attributed to them. In the mountains, hills or at a pool of water, sacrifices are made to the **nitu** in order to bring about a cure.

The **nitu** may appear as a snake (generally a python), a great **naga**. When appearing as humans, they are said to have closed ears and eyes. An invasion of their abode such as 'the forbidden bush' -- **pu piré oto séso** -- precipitates disaster unless they are propitiated (Arndt 1944:167). Bader (1970:951) also mentions a connection between rain, rainbow, and **nitu**; but in this case, particularly in association with a mythical horse called **djara nitu**, which is ridden by God across the rainbow.The days of the **nitu** are inverted; that is, when it is day time in the human realm, it is night time for the **nitu**. Thus, if the **nitu**'s sleep is disturbed at a spring in the day time, they punish the violator with illness (ibid).

Nagé

In the Nagé region **nitu** spirits are also associated with water, rain, and rainbow. The clubs of the malevolent **noa** spirits, apparently a type of **nitu**, are called **nitu bari todho** and **nitu noa boka wae**; and it is with these that the **noa** inflict disease and death (Bader 1970:952). In this form the **nitu** appear to regulate the continuity of life of humans and livestock. From Bader's account it would appear that in this region **nitu** is associated with spirits of the water that have a physical representation as a snake or horse which is equated with the rainbow (ibid:950-51). In their snake or horse representation, the **nitu** also appear to be agents of God that assist in the transition of the spirits of the deceased to the land of the dead. **Nitu** must also not be disturbed in their abode or they punish by death. The success of cultivated crops also appears to depend on the **nitu**.

The characteristic elements of the category of **nitu** in the Nagé region may be further filled out by consideration of a myth collected by Dr. Forth in the village of Bo'a Wae (1989, pers. comm.). In 'the Story of Lalo Sue and Siku Sue', the hero, Lalo Sue, is taken by two girls in the form of fishes to a spirit village beneath a pool in order to cure their father. Upon the completion of this task, Lalo Sue is rewarded with items which are transformed into material wealth, including gold chains, gold pieces, and four parangs, once he re-emerges into the human realm. These items become the heirlooms of his lineage. As discussed earlier, the **nitu** are associated with bodies of water in Nagé as elsewhere, and this and other information make it clear that in the myth Lalo Sue visited a village of the **nitu**. Again, we find that material wealth, and especially gold, is associated with **nitu**, the significance of which will be discussed in Chapter Three. It seems, then, that the **nitu** may be regarded, at least in this instance, as the source of material wealth. Aquatic animals, such as fish, are also linked with the **nitu** in Nagé. As shown in the myth, the **nitu** can assume the physical forms of humans as well as fish.

Ngadha:

Among the Ngadha of central Flores, **nitu** is a tripartite concept. The term **nitu** not only refers to the various earth spirits and to the spirits of the deceased, but also to the feminine divinity -- the "Earth Mother" or "Earth Goddess". Arndt (1930, 1931, 1936, 1937, 1954, 1956, 1960a, 1960b) differentiates the first two from the third sense by writing these as **nitu** and **Nitu** respectively. Thus, **Nitu** refers to the feminine divinity, whereas **nitu** refers both to the spirits of the deceased (or ancestors) and to the nature spirits.

As nature spirits, the **nitu** are generally associated with the earth and especially with water. They are also thought to make their home in uncultivated fields, tall trees, or in massive stones. The **nitu**'s abode is located primarily under the earth as well as in springs, wells, the coastal region, and in water sources in general. The **nitu** emerge to the surface at sites where the water breaks through the earth (van Staveren 1916:132).[10] The entrance to their abode is called **bata nitu** (**bata**=gate, entrance). The **nitu** come to the surface at the water sources at noon. During this time resting, speaking, or drinking at these places is prohibited (Arndt 1956:423). Any such disturbance of the **nitu** results in the subsequent illness of the transgressor, since the **nitu** captures his soul and carries it away to its abode. In this situation, the transgressor is said to be tied with or tied up by the **nitu** -- **nitu podzo** (Arndt 1956:424); **podzo** means 'to bind, to be tied' (Arndt 1961:424).

The **nitu** also 'retain' (**redo**) the souls of individuals who possess the same name as a **nitu**, in order to have a companion. In this connection, Arndt (1956:426) refers to and explains the term **tui nitu** as meaning 'to name or call the **nitu**'. As **tui** also means to severe the foreskin, circumcise, it seems that the expression may refer to the idea that the **nitu** severs the soul from the individual with whom it shares a common name.

In the vicinity of their abode, the **nitu** generally take the form of yellow, spotted snakes (Arndt 1930,1936,1937); or sometimes of shrimps and frogs (Arndt 1956,1960). The rainbow is also associated with the **nitu** and their snake form. As noted above, it is called **nitu niba.**

Niba means half-mature (Arndt 1930:844). The **nitu niba** are said to rise from the earth and to request rain.

In their snake form, the **nitu** are also conceived to be the guardians of settlements when appearing in a village. They are then called **ngebu nuca** (Arndt 1937:364). **Ngebu** means 'spirit, breath, wind', while **nuca** refers to a 'village, settlement, community' (Arndt 1961:367,381). In a similar manner, such snake manifestations of **nitu** in cultivated fields are thought to be the guardian spirits of the field. They are called **ngebu cuma** (Arndt 1937:364), **cuma** meaning 'field' (Arndt 1961:223). The destruction of these snakes is forbidden, and such an act is punished by illness or death [11].

The **nitu** can also assume a human form in dreams and visions. They dress in the finéries of nobles, in multicolored clothing. The **nitu** are believed to lead lives parallel to those of humans beneath the earth or within the water sources. Like humans, they also have their houses and agricultural fields. They eat the seed of **vako, vitu, xele,** and **meza** grasses which are their rice, maize, and millet respectively (Arndt 1939:899; 1937:197). The domestic livestock of the **nitu** include the field-rat, porcupine, and the wild cat, which are respectively their water buffalo, pigs, sheep, and goats (ibid).

The **nitu** can also appear to mortals as an attractive human male or female and engage in sexual relations; that is, they take human spouses (Arndt 1930:826; 1936:906; 1937:368; 1954;1956). Such human-spirit marriages result in illness for the male partner and in pregnancy for the female partner, which is similar to the idea as encountered in Eastern Flores.

The spirits of the deceased or the collective ancestral spirits are also called **nitu**. More specifically, the souls of the dead are identified with the **nitu**, living beneath the earth, in the abode of the **nitu** (Arndt 1930:826).[12] As ancestral **nitu**, they are called **cebu tengé**; **cebu** means 'grandfather' or 'ancestor' while **tengé** means 'real', 'own' or 'true' (Arndt 1961:539). They are generally held to be benevolent, and less hasty than the nature spirits to hand out punishments for their descendants' transgressions (Arndt 1930:826).

At death, it is thought that the soul leaves the body. It is said of a dead person that **nitu ni:u**[13], which Arndt translates as '**nitu** got a hold of him'. **Ni:u** or **nicu**, however, means 'to call', 'to invite (Arndt 1961:358); so the expression is perhaps more precisely glossed as '**nitu** called or invited him'. The souls of the dead are thought to travel to the land of the **nitu** through water sources (Arndt 1930:826). The souls live as humans do in their new home, and they must work their fields to support themselves. In a sense, they become **nitu**. Like **nitu**, the earth spirits, the ancestral spirits can also take the form of a snake.

The ancestral **nitu** are also connected with rain. In case of severe drought, a village official symbolically descends into a lake or water source where the **nitu** reside, and requests rain (Arndt 1954:294-295, 389-390).[14] Thus, the **nitu** are the source of rain, which nourish the fields which, in turn, feed their human descendants.

The nature spirits and the ancestral spirits among the Ngadha appear to be symbolically feminine in a number of ways. The association of **nitu** with earth, water, rain and the fertility of the fields, all imply their nurturing character. With regard to the symbolic femininity of the **nitu** as ancestors, it should be noted that the association of the dead with the feminine is also found elsewhere in Indonesia (see, for example, Forth 1981:92). Furthermore, the **nitu** are associated with weaving, generally a feminine task (Arndt 1937:368). In this connection, it is said of a particularly skilled weaver that her hands work like the hands of **nitu** (ibid). In the neighbouring Nagé region, furthermore, the headcloth worn during the general hunt represents a silk cloth originally stolen from the **nitu**, while silk generally is called by the Nagé **hoba nitu**, '**nitu** cloth' (Forth, pers. comm., 1989).

Another concept associated with the **nitu** in the Ngadha region is that of a feminine deity that appears to be an aspect of divinity, a theme I shall discuss more fully in Chapter 5. The Ngadha venerate the "Earth Mother"or "Earth Goddess", **Nitu**; and sacrifice to her in conjunction with Déva, the Creator. In prayers they are addressed together as **Nitu Déva** (Arndt 1930:825; 1956:422). **Nitu** is thought of as "Our Mother" and **Déva** as "Our

Father".[15] **Nitu Déva** are the first parental pair, whose children and descendants are human beings. **Nitu** is also the source of plants and game which nurture her children. Furthermore, it is thought that the dead are provided with their new home in the land of the **nitu** by **Nitu**. She is also associated with the earth and rain.

Riung:

Ideas held about **nitu** in the Riung region, to the north of the Ngadha, are somewhat similar to those of the Ngadha (Arndt 1936:364-366). The **nitu** are conceived as a group of nature spirits that make their homes in water sources, fields, tall and massive trees, in forked-paths and crossroads, and in great stones. The **nitu mbapu** are associated with liana and trees in general (ibid:362). **Mata vae,**[16] **ulung temok, manu nggaé, nitu vae,** and **nitu vatu** are all spirits classified as **nitu**. **Nitu** are generally held to be the lords of water sources. They take the form of snakes, but in dreams appear as beautifully dressed humans. The **nitu** can be malevolent towards humans. When their abode is invaded the violator's soul is caught and bound, a situation which results in the transgressor's illness or death.

Poso Vongko, the guardian spirit of the village, is the head of the **nitu**, having authority over the **nitu** of water sources, huge trees, and big stones. The **nitu nembu** live within the earth, and are offered to in order to ensure the productivity of the fields and in cases of illness. These are thought to be the souls of the dead who went to the **nitu** and who live among them (ibid:366), and so perhaps in a sense became **nitu**. They lead lives parallel to humans.

Nitu are associated with rain, and thus with the fertility of the earth. They are the spirits that mediate between humans and **Mori Keraeng**, the Creator. Sacrificing to the **nitu** for rain at water sources or big stones is necessary for **Mori Keraeng** to grant rain. **Mori Keraeng** is also the Manggarai name for the Creator God, or ' highest being' (Verheijen 1951).

In the eastern part of the Manggarai region, in Rembong and Rajong, **nitu** are generally conceived as water spirits -- **nitu waeq** -- as opposed to the spirits of the recently dead who are called **bapuq** (Erb 1987:182,861). They are the guardians of all water sources. The **nitu** are also related to the spirits of the meadows and the forests (ibid:185). They are directly responsible for rain as well as for the abundance of water in springs and rivers. The theme of sexual intercourse between human females and water spirits is also present in these parts of Manggarai (ibid:185-186). The **nitu** may assume the form of snakes, eels, and shrimps. Communication with these spirits is established through a functionary who consumes these physical manifestations of **nitu** (Erb 1987:632). The water spirits are propitiated for sufficient rainfall to ensure the success of the newly planted crops (ibid:184). Rainbows are also connected with springs and water spirits (ibid:187). The water spirits can moreover cause disaster -- either flooding due to too much rain or drought, and thus crop-failure -- because of some transgression of the regulations relating to the sacred objects that were handed down by the ancestors (Erb 1987:183-184). Spirits called **nitu** are also thought to protect the house, village, and the fields. In this connection, a bottle of water from the water source of the village is buried at the center of these places (ibid:183).

The concept of **nitu** on Flores is thus generally connected with nature spirits, especially water spirits, and with the spirits of the deceased.This latter association, however, is not found everywhere on Flores. Although there are some differences in the representations of **nitu**, the regional variations are not too significant. It is interesting to note as well that cognates of **bapu** on Flores parallel **nitu**. The Lio and Rembong terms, **bapu** and **bapuq** respectively, refer to the spirits of the deceased, while Riung **mbapu** is a kind of **nitu**, a nature spirit.The Ngadha region distinguishes itself in that here **nitu** also includes the notion of a feminine deity, or of an aspect of divinity, about which I shall say more in Chapter Five. On Flores, as on some of the other islands, we find an association of **nitu** with physical substances necessary to life itself: water, rain, earth, and so on. Thus,

in certain respects the **nitu** can be seen as sources of life. The destructive potential of **nitu** is connected as elsewhere with the invasion of their abode and with human-spirit marriage. It is interesting, moreover, that such terms as Ngadha **ngebu**, and Riung **nembu** and **mbapu**, are applied to specific kinds of **nitu**; and that these as well as the Lionese and Rembong terms for the spirits of the deceased, **bapu** and **bapuq** respectively, suggest an affinity with PAN ***e(m)pu**, 'grandfather', 'ancestor', 'grandchild' (Dempwolff 1938:50). and on a semantic basis also with ***pu**, 'lord' and ***puhun**, 'origin','base','trunk' (ibid:120). These social and metaphoric concepts connect **nitu** with the notions of 'origin' and 'source', which are also implicit in the feminine representation of **nitu** among the Ngadha, especially with regards to the feminine Earth Mother, **Nitu**, the mother of humanity.

The Oceanic Groups:

Some of the Oceanic societies also possess cognates of **nitu**, and there appears also to be a conceptual continuity with the Malayo-Polynesian societies of insular Southeast Asia. In the following section I shall review these Oceanic cognates of **nitu**.

The Marshall Islands

Among this Oceanic group in Micronesia, ghosts are called **anitsch** (Moss 1925:57). **Anitsch** would appear to be related to PAN ***anitu**. The **anitsch** are the spirits of the deceased. Special places are considered as their abodes, such as certain stones, trees, and even fish. In certain respects the **anitsch** seem to be equivalent to nature spirits, and perhaps the fish are to be regarded as a physical form of these spirits.

Samoa

The Samoans of western Polynesia refer to spirits in general as **aitu** (Brown 1972:226). **Aitu** are usually malevolent towards humans. They are said to trap any unfortunate

traveller who trespasses in their abode. Strange noises, flickering lights, and the unexpected appearance of some animal are all signs of the presence of **aitu** spirits. The **aitu** in this context seem to be nature spirits. They are believed to attack humans with invisible weapons, and thereby cause them illness or death (Brown 1972:227; Freeman 1984:177). The Samoan priest, **taula-aitu**, can invoke the assistance of those **aitu** that have control over particular diseases, either to remove the complaint or inflict the disease upon individuals with whom the priest's clients are at enmity (Brown 1972:247).

The Samoans believe that a fisherman's name should not be mentioned on shore or at sea, since the **aitu** would overhear and report it to the fish and sharks. Because of such a warning, the fisherman would come back empty handed (ibid:249). It is not surprising to find such an association between **aitu**, a large body of water, and aquatic animals,since we have seen similar connections in the Indonesian context.

According to Buzacott (1836, cited in Freeman 1984:175), every individual has his **aitu**. In this sense the **aitu** can be regarded as personal guardian spirits. The **aitu** can take the form of certain birds, fish, reptiles, and insects. They are believed to be subordinate to the Creator god, **Tagaloa-a-Lagi**. Every Samoan family is said to possess a spirit medium who is the intermediary between the family **aitu** and ancestors. The family **aitu** is a tutelary spirit that is said to inhabit some familiar object, animate or inanimate, which is therefore regarded with reverence (Williamson 1937:10).

According to Williamson (1937:10), the descendants of the original gods are also classified as **aitu**. These comprise war gods, family gods, those invoked by prophets and sorcerers, as well as the tutelary spirits of various trades and employment. Humans can also become **aitu** after death, with the power to bestow good or bad fortune on their survivors (ibid:11). These particular **aitu** are the agents of the Creator, whose commands they carry out. The spirits of dead chiefs become **aitu**. Furthermore, these **aitu** are also thought to be the protective spirits of the village and district (Williamson 1937:11). The Samoan conception

of **aitu** therefore includes the territorial nature spirits, intermediary spirits between god and man, and the spirits of the deceased who may act as tutelary spirits.

Rotuma and Ontong Java

On Rotuma, 'gods' or 'spirits' in general are called **sonoiitu** (Williamson 1937:50). **Aitu** is also used in the Mamasa ceremony for 'god' in the modern Christian sense (Marseau 1986:17). **Sonoiitu** is related to the term **nitu**. Williamson (1937:36) reports that on Ontong Java the spirits of the ancestors are called **aitu**.

Solomon Islands

According to Brown (1972:209), on these Melanesian islands the term **nitu** refers to a class of spirits that are intermediaries between the living and the spirits of the dead. They are thought to take the essence (or spirit) of the food offerings to the **nunuma**, the spirit of a dead chief (ibid:215). Vilasa (1986:61-65) also mentions the term **nitu** in connection with the spirits of the ancestors. On San Jorge the term referring to 'spirit' or 'devil' is **naunitu**, with the short form being **nitu**. The inhabitants of this island believe that at death the spirits of the deceased go to a nearby island, to **Molu Nitu**, the 'island of spirits'.

Northwestern New Britain

The Lusi-speaking Kalaia people designate spirits, or more particularly ghosts, as **antu** (Counts and Comb 1985:132-134). These spirits are said to take on both human and animal forms. They are generally believed to be malevolent. Ghosts categorized as **antu** are said to leave no tracks. It is of interest that **antu**, 'ghost' or 'spirit of the deceased', especially resembles the term used among the Iban of Borneo, who are not an Oceanic but a Western Malayo-Polynesian-speaking group. This identity of terms would seem to indicate convergence rather than borrowing.

III

It is evident from our survey of various Austronesian populations that **nitu** is clearly an old Austronesian term. The wide distribution of cognates appears to form a unity which is not only lexical in nature but conceptual as well. We find a distribution of the concept from Formosa to as far as Samoa. The term **nitu**, as an Austronesian category, seems to entail a polythetic class (Needham,1975), which has a number of elements as its components. These components can occur in isolation and in various combinations, thus producing an overlap from region to region. In a polythetic class there is no one attribute or element that all members have in common, and the evidence for the category of **nitu** seems to bear this out. Table 1. gives a summary of the distribution these elements associated with the concept of **nitu**.

Table 1. Characteristic Elements of the Polythetic Class nitu.

Population / Language groups	Characteristic features of the Austronesian concept nitu																					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Paiwanic																						
Formosa :																						
Bunun	x								x					x								
Western Malayo-Polynesian																						
Lanyu :																						
Yami	x	x							x													
Philippines :																						
Luzon:																						
Aeta		x						x	x													
Apayo	x														x						x	
Bontok	x							x								x	x					
Itneg																					x	
Kalinga	x																x					
Lepanto	x															x	x					
Pagan Gaddang																						x
Mindanao:																						
Mandaya																					x	
Bagobo																x					x	
Malay:	x	x		x		x			x		x		x			x						

Population / Language groups	Characteristic features of the Austronesian concept nitu																					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Western Malayo-Polynesian																						
Borneo:																						
Iban	x			x	x				x		x			x	x	x						
Land Dayak		x				x			x		x											
Sulawesi :																						
Mori - Lalɨ	x																				x	
Bare'e	x			x					x					x	x	x						
Mentawai:	x																					
Mariana Is.:																						
Chomorro	x	x	x						x						x							
Central Malayo-Polynesian																						
Moluccas / Seram	x	x			x	x							x		x		x		x			
Tanimbar	x																x					
Kei / Tanebar-Evav		x												x	x			x	x		x	
Wetar	x																					
Roti	x	x			x	x			x		x			x								
Timor:																						
Atoni	x	x			x								x	x			x					

Population / Language groups	Characteristic features of the Austronesian concept nitu																					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Central Malayo-Polynesian																						
Solor / Adonara		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x								
Flores:																						
East Flores		x	x	x	x			x	x		x		x						x	x		
Sikka	x	x			x		x	x	x			x	x									
Ende		x						x					x									
Lio		x	x	x	x	x	x		x					x						x	x	
Ngadha	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x		x	x		
Riung	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x					x				
Rembong / Rajong		x	x	x	x		x	x			x			x					x	x		
Nagé		x	x	x	x		x	x	x					x						x		
Oceanic:																						
Marshall Is.	x	x																				
Samoa	x	x		x			x	x	x												x	
Rotuma																					x	
Solomon Is.	x																					

Population / Language groups	Characteristic features of the Austronesian concept nitu																				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Oceanic:																						
Ontong Java	x																					
NW. New Britain	x					x															x	

Legend to Table 1. : 1=spirits of the deceased; 2=nature spirits; 3=association with rain; 4=association with water; 5= association with snakes; 6=can assume the form of human beings; 7=punish with storms and flood; 8=invasion of abode is punished; 9=sources of disease and death; 10=agents of God; 11=human-spirit marriage; 12=female deity; 13=association with the earth; 14=association with the fertility of the fields; 15=association with head-hunting; 16=can possess people; 17=association with life-cycle rites; 18=genealogical ancestors; 19=soul capture; 20=association with rainbow; 21=spirits in general; 22=**anito**=supernatural power inherent in certain objects.

The PAN reconstructions of *anitu (Dempwolff 1938) and *nitu (Wurm and Wilson 1975) have been glossed as 'soul, ghost, ancestral spirit' and 'spirit,soul' respectively. The present cognates of the term **nitu** indicate a close association with spirits of the deceased (or ancestors) and with nature spirits. It is the former meaning that is more frequently connected with cognates of **nitu** in the major Austronesian[17] subgroups of Formosan, Western Malayo-Polynesian, Central Malayo-Polynesian, and Oceanic languages. It seems very likely, however, that both meanings of **nitu** were present in the original Austronesian language, since, as I discuss below and in Chapter Three, there appears to be a strong similarity or even an identity between the spirits of the deceased and nature spirits with respect to their representation and conceptual associations. An independent development of the meaning 'nature spirit' is, furthermore, unlikely in the different subgroups of the Austronesian language family. The concept of **nitu** appears to form an important element in Austronesian religion, since both the form which shows little variation from one language grouping to another, and the conceptual associations of the term have survived the Austronesian expansion and the splitting of the linguistic subgroups with apparently very little overall change.

IV

The association of 'nature spirits' with certain cognates of **nitu** should not be ignored. In many respects, **nitu**, as nature spirits, are structurally equivalent with the spirits of the deceased or with ancestral spirits. The various representations and conceptual associations of **nitu** are similar or even identical, whether **nitu** are conceived as nature or ancestral spirits. As most of the eastern Indonesian and some of the Oceanic examples demonstrate, at a certain level there is an identification of the two senses of **nitu**.

The identification of **nitu** with nature spirits enjoys a more widespread distribution among the Central Malayo-Polynesian speakers of eastern Indonesia, although it is also

encountered among some Oceanic groups. Both the nature spirits and the spirits of the deceased may be viewed as sources of life and continuity. In this context, there appear to be a number of parallels between the two primary conceptual associations of **nitu**. For example, the **nitu** as ancestral spirits tend to be associated with the success of crops and the fertility of the fields, with success in hunting and fishing, with human fertility, and with successful transitions in the different stages of the life cycle, and thus with cyclical human affairs in general. They are the source of disease as well, which they inflict as a form of punishment for violations of social norms and rules. Similarly, the **nitu** as nature spirits tend to be connected with physical requirements of life, such as earth, water sources, and rain. These substances are either directly or indirectly conceived to be the sources of nurture and continuity. The nature spirits are associated with the fertility of fields and crops which nourish humanity and livestock, and thus provide for the continuity of life. The nature spirits are also the punitive agents of disease and death.

Either as nature or ancestral spirits, the **nitu** appear to be ambiguous entities, both sources of life and continuity and of death and discontinuity. However, discontinuity can be regarded as having a regulatory function, since it is connected with the maintenance of cosmic order and of the boundary between the realms of humans and spirits. I shall discuss the themes of 'source', 'continuity' and 'order' in more detail in the following chapter, where matters that I have touched upon here, in connection with the concept of **nitu**, particularly with respect to the structural equivalence between the nature and ancestral spirits, will be clarified further.

V

In the foregoing discussion I have demonstrated the wide distribution of the term **nitu** and its cognates among the Formosan, Western Malayo-Polynesian, Central Malayo-Polynesian, and Oceanic speaking populations of the Austronesian language. I reached

the conclusion that the reflexes of PAN *anitu form a polythetic class and a unity that is conceptual as well as lexical. I inferred that the term nitu and its cognates originally referred to nature spirits and to the spirits of the deceased and/or to ancestral spirits. I suggested that this conceptual association of nitu must have been an important aspect of Austronesian religion to have survived the expansion of the Austronesian speakers, and thus, the divergence of the linguistic subgroups. It is conceivable, then, that the category nitu, both as spirits of the deceased and as nature spirits, had a major place in the original Austronesian system of religion. The various representations and ideological or symbolic associations of nitu seem to indicate a structural equivalence between nitu as 'nature spirits' and as 'spirits of the dead'.

In the following chapter I shall continue the discussion of themes of 'source', 'origin', and 'continuity' that have emerged from the above linguistic considerations of the term nitu. I will endeavor to show how these notions are important and relevant to the analysis and understanding of this Austronesian concept. In this connection I shall consider further and in more detail the various representations of nitu. Nitu, as sources of life and death, and thus of continuity and order, will be discussed. Furthermore, representations of nitu pertaining to these themes will be considered in a comparison of the western Indonesian and eastern Indonesian ideas about nitu. I shall also look at material expressions of the themes of 'source' and 'continuity' in connection with nitu.

CHAPTER THREE :

NITU,' ORIGIN', 'SOURCE', AND 'CONTINUITY

This chapter concerns how the concept of **nitu** can be understood and analyzed in the context of certain major themes connected with this term and its various Austronesian cognates. Although the term **nitu** is a Central Malayo-Polynesian reflex of the Proto-Austronesian term ***anitu**, in my discussion of the concept of **nitu** I shall continue to use the term **nitu**, for the sake of convenience, even when referring to cognate terms in various Western Malayo-Polynesian and Oceanic groups. I would also note that the major crux of the data for the forthcoming analysis derives from the ethnographic literature from eastern Indonesia, since as I noted in the introduction, the most detailed information on the category of **nitu** derives from this region.

I

As shown previously, **nitu** are most frequently conceived to be the spirits of the deceased, or ancestral spirits in a collective sense, throughout the Austronesian speaking region. In the Rotinese and Kei cases, the category of **nitu** applies or refers exclusively to genealogical ancestors; that is, to ancestors to whom descent is traced back lineally. As ancestors, the **nitu** are of course the source of humanity and the origin of their descendants. Among the Ngadha and Riung people of Flores the category of **nitu** that are conceived to be ancestral spirits are more specifically designated by the terms **cebu** and **nembu** respectively. Both these terms, I have suggested, are reflexes of PAN ***e(m)pu**, 'ancestor, grandchild, grandfather' (Dempwolff 1938:50); and strictly on a semantic basis appear to be related to PAN ***puhun**, 'source','origin','tree trunk' (Dempwolff 1938:120). These terms also imply that **nitu**, as ancestors, are the 'source' and 'origin' of society.

Among the Indonesian groups to be discussed below, the **nitu** spirits are localized to a particular site, such as a village or a house, which may be regarded as a place of 'origin' and a symbol of 'continuity' for a social group. As Fox (1980a:11) notes, "in many eastern Indonesian societies, the category of "house" defines and often locates a descent group of a varying segmentary order" .

As noted earlier, on Roti the benevolent ancestral spirits of the inside or of the house are called **nitu uma** (Fox 1973). There exists a hierarchy of **nitu** spirits, in which the **nitu** of apical lineage ancestors are regarded as more powerful (ibid:348). Connected with this notion is the existence of a hierarchy of ancestral houses (descent houses), houses belonging to particular patrilineages. **Uma nitu** refers to any household that is able to provide the expenses for funeral feasts, and the phrase defines a descent group of a limited extent (ibid:347).These named ancestral **nitu** are invoked in most rites, and they are thought to have influence on most undertakings of their descendants. They are believed to guard the household; that is, the most minimal form of descent group.It would appear that again the benevolent ancestral spirits, **nitu nai dalek**, are the source of life for humanity, not only in the sense that from them originated their living descendants, but also in the sense, relating to ideas of continuity, that they are invoked in all major rites that ensure the continuity of life and well-being of their descendants. The **nitu nai dalek** are spirits of the inside, and in a sense can be associated with culture.They appear to provide for continuity both in the biological and cultural or social sense. These **nitu**, furthermore, are designated of as the spirits of the west, which is the direction that is regarded as the source of fertility and growth both in a physical and spiritual sense (ibid:363-364). The youngest son who inherits the **nitu uma**, and thus the ancestor cult, has an especially close relationship with the spirits of the west. Therefore, the **nitu uma** may be regarded as the material expression of the generative power of the **nitu**; and thus as a symbol of the ideas of 'origins','source', and 'continuity'.

On Tanebar-Evav (Kei Islands) the **nit** are the genealogical spirits of the dead of the house and of the village (Barraud 1979:233). The **duad-nit**, the ancestors of the wife-givers, are considered to be the most important of all ancestors. They are considered by the people of Tanebar-Evav to be the source of continuity for the wife-taking group, and of generative power. In Indonesia, or at least in eastern Indonesia, the category of wife-giver tends generally to be regarded as a "source of life" (See Fox 1980a:14; Forth 1981:77; Traube 1986:92) By the same token, then, the wife-giver group is the source of continuity for society. The **nit** are collectively called **duad-kabav**, 'the gods of below', who stand in opposition to **duad-karatat**, 'the god of above', the god of the sun and moon. Since the earth and sky are viewed as feminine and masculine respectively throughout Indonesia,it may be inferred that the **nit** are also collectively feminine, which agrees with their being a source of life and generative power. Therefore, the physical structure of the house associated with the **nit** can be seen as a material symbol of origins and of generative potential providing continuity for humanity and society.

In this regard, it is also interesting that Arndt (1961:360) gives 'descent house' (or 'house of origin') as the gloss for the expression **nitu ricu** among the Ngadha of Flores. Since the oldest, principal houses of a particular level of descent grouping are referred to by specific terms -- **saõ gaé**, principal house of the clan; **saõ puu**, principal house of the clan segment; **saõ mézé**, principal house of a secondary clan segment -- **nitu ricu** may be a term that refers to all sorts of principal houses of a particular level of descent grouping. As mentioned in the previous chapter, one meaning of **nitu** among the Ngadha is the spirits of the deceased or the collective ancestral spirits. **Ricu** can mean 'to come from', 'to hail from', or 'to originate from' (Arndt 1961:464). Therefore, **nitu ricu** might be translated as 'originating from or coming from the ancestors'. In the general sense, then, the 'descent house' is the physical expression of the notion that the **nitu**, as collective ancestral spirits, are the 'source' and 'origin' of their descendants.

In the Nagé region, just to the east of the Ngadha, there is perhaps an interesting connection between the concept of **nitu** and the 'ancestral houses' of the two most prominent clans in the region of Bo'a Wae. As elsewhere in Flores, here the **nitu** are associated with pools of water, **tiwu**; and it is therefore worthy of note that the clans Deu and Tegu call their ancestral houses **tiwu Deu** and **tiwu Tegu** (Forth 1989, pers.comm.). This name may indicate that in the same way that water is a source of life, so is the oldest house of a descent group the source and origin of life of the members of the descent group. Another possible interpretation, however, might be that in the same way as a pool is a gathering of water, so the 'ancestral house' is a gathering place for the descent group or lineage. This interpretation is suggested by the relation of the terms **tiwo**, ' gathering', and **tiwa**, 'to gather together', to **tiwu**, 'pool' (ibid).

As noted, the Bare'e speaking Toraja of Sulawesi also localize their **anitu**; in this case in the village temple or smithy. The smithy is called **sowali**, which also means 'smithy','temple', 'abode of the dead','council house' (Downs 1956:55) The **anitu** are called **pue ri wumbu**, 'lord under the ridge' of the temple (Downs 1956:32). These **anitu** are the spirits of the distinguished men of the village, such as chiefs and village founders (ibid:32). In life they were the leaders of their descent group and the source of authority and order for the community. After death, they become the source of health for the villagers and their crops. The **anitu** are the source of generative potential for the fields. The dispensing of this potential is dependent on their being propitiated with the offering of enemy heads from head-hunting expeditions. The **anitu**, as spirits of chiefs, village founders, and of men of influence in their community, are thus the source and origin of their community and of its continued existence. The expression 'lord under the ridge' includes the term **pue**. **Pue** appears to be linguistically related to PAN ***pu** and semantically related to PAN ***puhun.** ***Pu** means 'lord,ancestor', and ***puhun** means 'tree trunk', 'basis', 'origin','source' (Dempwolff 1938:120). Barnes (1979) advances the view that these two terms are at least semantically related in his discussion concerning the relationship

between the concept of origin and source and certain kinship terms among various Austronesian groups. Fox (1988) points out that 'origins' and the tracing back of descent to a founding ancestor or to a place of origin is frequently expressed by the botanic idiom of the tree in many eastern Indonesian societies. The tree trunk is conceived as the 'origin' and 'source'. Thus, the **anitu** are the ancestors who are the source of their descent group; and the physical structure of the temple embodies this attribute of the **anitu**.

As noted earlier, among the Wemale of southeastern Seram the superior being of the domain, **Nitu haulu**, is contacted by the priests in the **Tankole** house. A further use of this house is to speak to the **nitu**, the spirits of the dead; and to shelter and cure the seriously ill (Jensen 1948:91). Thus, it would appear that, in the context of the **Tankole** house, the **nitu** are associated with curing and hence with the continuity of life.

According to Williamson (1937:151-152), the Samoans also build a sacred building, the **fale-aitu**, or house of the gods, for some **aitu**, principally for war gods. These **aitu** guarded the villagers in case of war, so that the existence and continuity of the community depended on them during war time.

Among the groups discussed above, the conception of the ancestral **nitu** as either the source and origin of their descendants and of their continuity, or as both of these, appears to have found a material expression in a physical structure -- namely the house or temple -- which is connected with the notion of descent. These structures appear to take on some of the characteristic features of the **nitu**. More specifically, these physical structures can be regarded as the symbols of the generative principle, and of continuity that is attributed to the **nitu** spirits inhabiting them.The connection between **nitu** and the house is best understood in the context of the association between ancestors, descent, and the idea of a house of origin.

As Fox (1980a:10-12) points out, in the eastern Indonesian context, the house is a symbolic expression of origins; and often defines a descent group of a certain extent. The principal house of a descent group is generally associated with a founding ancestor (or

ancestors) to whom the living trace their descent. In his essay on "The Social Organization of the Kwakiutl", Lévi-Strauss (1982:163-187) similarly considers the notions of 'house societies' and of the house as a "place of origin". He views the house as a symbolic expression which is the focus of various social categories and relations, an entity which cuts across all levels of social life. Thus he states:

> Patrilineal descent and matrilineal descent, filiation and residence, hypergamy and hypogamy, close marriage and distant marriage, heredity and election : all these notions, which usually allow anthropologists to distinguish the various known types of society, are reunited in the house ... the spirit ... of this institution expresses an effort to transcend, in all spheres of collective life, theoretically incompatible principles (1982:184).

The ancestral **nitu**, however, can be seen as sources of discontinuity as well as of continuity. They punish their descendants with illness, death, and various catastrophes that effect the crops, livestock, and hunting. Nevertheless, in this punitive role, the spirits of the deceased can be seen to uphold order in society, since their direct intervention is usually precipitated by the breaking of social rules, sanctions, and norms. Thus in this way too, health, continued well-being, and maintenance of order in society originate from the **nitu** as collective ancestral spirits.

Physical materials necessary to human welfare and life are dependent on the **nitu**. In particular, the fertility of the cultivated fields and the prosperity of livestock require their blessing. If offended or neglected, they withhold this blessing. Therefore, in a sense the **nitu**, as ancestors may be viewed as a source of nourishment for their descendants. The head-hunting practices of the Iban of Borneo, the Atoni of Timor, and of the Bare'e of Sulawesi should be mentioned in this connection. Among the Iban the trophy head is called **antu pala** (Freeman 1979:234). As was discussed earlier, **antu** means 'ghost' or those spirits of the deceased who died an unnatural death. The **antu pala** is the source of continued fecundity of the rice fields (ibid:243). It is sprinkled with water while requesting

rain in case of a drought (ibid:244). The elaborate head-hunting rituals of the Iban focus on this notion of source and fertility for the fields that nourish humanity, and in this way are essential to the existence of the community.

The Bare'e Toraja also conceive the **anitu**, the spirits of deceased, distinguished men in the village, to be the source of continued productivity of the rice fields (Downs 1956,1983). These **anitu** are propitiated with enemy heads from head-hunting expeditions. The **anitu** are said to "feed" on the heads of the enemy; and if not fed, they will inflict disease and death on the living. The heads generally ensure the health and fertility of the human population and of their fields.

Head-hunting is also found among the Atoni of Timor (Schulte Nordholt 1971:393). Among the Atoni, head-hunting is aimed at increasing the **nitu** population; that is, the number of souls of the deceased (ibid:393). In order to maintain the strength of a political community, both the souls of the living and of the deceased must be increased, through birth and head-hunting respectively. Although, here, head-hunting is not connected with ideas of agricultural fertility as elsewhere, the major operative theme is still generative power. Thus the objective of head-hunting is still the welfare of the community and also the maintenance of order, and indirectly these are dependent on the **nitu**.

Head-hunting in Indonesia in general seems to be connected with the notion of fertility (Downs 1983).[1] The head tends to be regarded as a symbol of fertility and virility, the repository of generative power[2]. Freeman (1979:236) discusses these notions in connection with the Iban. In this regard it is important to note that PAN * **ulu** is glossed both as 'head' and as 'beginning' (Dempwolff 1938:162). Thus, the heads appear to be associated with sources or beginnings and coming into being. Head-hunting practices being associated with **nitu** as ancestral spirits should therefore be viewed in the context of the general notions of 'origin', 'source', and 'continuity' as attributes of the ancestors in relation to the living. Again, the **nitu** spirits in this context are the sources of fertility and generative potential.[3]

The **nitu**, as ancestral spirits, are also invoked in life cycle rites. Among the Bontok, Kalinga, and Lepanto of the Philippines the **anito** have a role in the funerary rites. As noted, their assistance is required in order to ensure the safe passing and welfare of the soul of the deceased in the land of the dead. The Tanimbarese invoke the **nitu** in all life cycle ceremonies. Among the Atoni of Timor the **nitu** are invoked during life cycle rites in order to secure the fertility of the crops and a good harvest. Similarly, among the Wemale of southeastern Seram both the spirits of the deceased, **nitu** or **Iola**, and the superior being of the domain, **Nitu haulu**, play a very important role in boys' puberty rites. The initiands are believed to be ready to re-enter society as adults after they have lived a period of time (their period of seclusion) with the spirits of the dead. It would appear, therefore, that the **nitu** have an important role in the successful transition of an individual through the different stages of the life cycle in various Indonesian societies. Throughout Indonesia, a major concern of life cycle ceremonies is the fertility of both humanity and the fields. Thus, the involvement of the **nitu**, as ancestors, in the life cycle rites again indicates them to be a source of life and continuity for their descendants, and an embodiment of the generative principle. Since life cycle rites often involve a change of social status, the **nitu** may in this regard also be viewed as sources of social order.

In several of the cultures discussed previously, the **nitu** (including their ancestral spirit representations) are identified with snakes, the snake being their main physical form. The snake appears to be an appropriate symbol of continuity since it does not seem to die (Lurker 1983:98-99); as it sheds its skin, it appears to undergo death but then to be reborn. In the same way, then, the ancestors appear to continue their existence in their new form of a snake. Furthermore, in various cultures around the world the snake is regarded as a protective and guardian animal (see, for example, Lurker 1983:93-115; Vatter 1935), a view which is consistent with the role of the ancestors towards their descendants. As noted, certain kinds of **nitu** among the Ngadha of central Flores, namely the **ngebu cuma** and the **ngebu nuca**, act as guardians of the field and the village respectively. Snakes are an

embodiment of village guardian spirits among the Kédang of Lembata as well (Barnes 1974:49).

On some of the eastern Indonesian islands, the ancestral **nitu** are further associated with the earth and water. The earth and bodies of water are thought to be their abode (see, for example, Atoni, Kei, Solor, Adonara, Ngadha, Riung, and also Samoa). The Ngadha also believe that the spirits of the dead travel to their new home among the **nitu** through water, more specifically through springs (Arndt 1930:826). As it will become clearer when we consider **nitu** as nature spirits, the elements of water and earth should be seen in this context as the physical prerequisites of life itself. The nourishment and thus physical continuity of humanity are dependent on them. In the light of the association of **nitu**, as ancestral spirits, with the previously raised concepts of fertility, regeneration, nurture, and continuity, the connection with earth and water are therefore quite significant. In certain respects, water can also be seen as a boundary between the realm of humans and that of **nitu**, a boundary that provides both conjunction and disjunction. I shall elaborate on this notion further below.

II

As nature spirits, the **nitu** are also connected with a number of notions that have affinity with the themes of 'source', 'origins', and 'continuity'. They are associated with such basic elements or sources of life as rain, water, and earth. Such associations with **nitu** occur mostly among the Central Malayo-Polynesian speakers, although as noted they are also found among the some of the Western Malayo-Polynesian groups, and also among Oceanic speaking Samoans.

Rain that nourishes the fields and ensures a good harvest is commonly conceived to be dependent on the **nitu**. In the Manggarai, Riung, Ngadha,[4] and Lio regions of Flores and on the islands of Solor and Adonara the **nitu** are the sources of rain; and in case of drought

are given sacrifices. It is also noteworthy that in certain cases rain is equated with the body or vital fluids of the **nitu**. Thus, in East Flores, rain is thought to be the urine of the **nitu**. On Solor and Adonara the urine or tears of the **nitu** is said to be the rain. In the Ngadha region, in certain contexts, rain is equated with the milk of **Nitu**, the Earth Goddess, and the "water" (presumably semen) of **Déva**, the Creator (Arndt 1930:841). It is through these fluids of life that the fields can become fertile and nourish human beings. Furthermore, the fertility of the land is often equated with the fertility of humanity. In the association of rain with **nitu**, it is therefore implied that **nitu** embody the creative potential of water and in this way too are a source of life. By providing nourishment for the fields, the **nitu** are the source of physical well-being and nurture for humanity, thereby ensuring the continuity of life.

Water sources in general, and especially springs, are viewed as the domain of the **nitu**. As noted earlier, in Borneo, the river spirits, **antu ai**, play a significant role in an infant's first bathing ritual, which is called **meri' anak mandi** (Sather 1988:157-187). In this rite of transition, the favorable disposition of the river spirits toward the new member of the community is sought. These spirits are generally thought to be hostile towards humans, but may nevertheless act as personal guardians. In this first bathing rite, the child's ritual persona is established, as the ceremony marks the entry of the infant into the human community and establishes a relation between the infant and the **antu** of the natural world. It is therefore clear that in certain respects the **antu** may be regarded as the guarantors of human life, since after the proper relationship has been established with the river spirits they would not take the newborn child's life. In addition, their involvement in the life cycle rite suggests that continuity of social, and not only biological, life is dependent upon them .

The spring is conceived as the home of the **nitu** among many eastern Indonesian groups, whereas in Samoa the **aitu** are associated with the sea. The importance of springs may be understood in relation to agriculture and that of the sea in the context of sea

fishing. In either case, however, the water provides nourishment for humanity, either directly or indirectly, by supplying fish or by nourishing the fields that provide the crops.

In the eastern part of the Manggarai region of western Flores, particularly in Rembong and Rajong, the spring is identified with the water spirits called **nitu waeq** (Erb 1987:182). **Waeq** means water, and **mata waeq** refers to a spring as 'the eye or source of the water' (ibid). The spring, and thus **nitu**, are not only believed to nourish the fields but also to ensure the health and welfare of the community. The water spirits protect and guard the house, village, and fields. As noted, a bottle of water is buried at the centre of these sites which contain the life-conferring power of the **nitu** (ibid:183). Therefore, the spring of the village and the **nitu** that are identified with it can be regarded as the source of life and continuity of the community. Just to the east of Rembong and Rajong, in the Riung area of Flores the spirits of the springs, **nitu vae**, are actually called **mata vae**, thus by the term for 'spring' itself (Arndt,1936). Thus here too, **nitu** can be seen as the sources of fertility for the fields, and the source of life-sustaining water for humans.

In connection with water and the notion of 'source', a few words should be said about the term **mata**, especially as in both of the cases just mentioned, this term is linked with **nitu**, as water spirits. According to Dempwolff (1938:106) PAN ***mata** means 'eye'. However, as Barnes (1977:302) points out, there are other cognitive associations of this term among Austronesian speakers. Among other things, the term can mean 'source of a river', 'focus', 'centre', 'orifice', 'face', the source of a thing', 'edge', 'point', 'mesh', 'tip', 'source', 'origin' (ibid:303-304). Among the Tetum of Timor **matan** also refers to 'spring', 'river', and 'any point of emergence' (Hicks 1978:299). Thus the PAN term ***mata** entails a family of concepts.

In the Manggarai and Riung cases, then, the term **mata** evidently refers to 'spring' and 'source'. The gloss of 'source' is appropriate in the sense that the spring and the **nitu** identified with it are the sources of generative power for the fields, and, for the Manggarai at least, also the source of protection which embodies continuity. It is also fitting that the

bottle of water that represents the protective and life generating power of the **nitu** is buried at the centre of the house, village, and the field, since 'centre' is another meaning of **mata**.

Although the term **mata** is not mentioned by Barraud (1979) in connection with the **mitu** spirits of the Tanebar-Evav people, there is an association between one particular **mitu** and the concept of 'centre' and possibly of 'origin'. Thus, the **mitu** Lev is the autochthonous spirit, the **mitu** of the "navel of the island", who is conceived to be both a free spirit and an ancestor (ibid:233). In this connection, it should be noted that in other Indonesian languages there is a semantic association between 'navel' and 'centre'. For example, the Malay term **pusat** means both 'centre' and 'navel'; eastern Sumbanese **puhu** refers to 'navel', 'navel cord', 'heart', and 'middle'(Forth 1989, pers. comm.); the Kédang term **puhé** means 'navel' and 'centre' (Barnes 1974:47,148); and similarly the Ngadha term **pusé** means 'navel', 'middle', and 'centre' (Arndt 1961:435). It is interesting to note, furthermore, that the term **mata** is often paired with a reflex of PAN ***puhun**, 'origin', 'trunk', 'base' (Dempwolff 1938:120) in many eastern Indonesian languages, particularly in formal, parallelistic speech idioms. Among the Nagé and Ngadha of central Flores, for example, we find **mata** paired with **pu'u** (Forth 1989, pers.comm.), among the eastern Sumbanese **mata** is paired with **pingi** (Forth 1981:287, 495), and among the Kédang **matan** is complemented by **puén** (Barnes 1974:106,229-233).This pairing is especially significant in so far as both of these terms can refer to 'source' or 'origin'.

Referring to the above mentioned family of concepts commonly entailed by **mata**, Barnes (1977:302) notes that,

> ...this family shows persistent connections with the idea of transition; and in this respect the word often expresses ideas of spiritual influence, growth and the general movement of life.

It would appear, then, that "ideas of spiritual influence, growth, and the general movement of life" are all things involved in the association of **nitu** and water among peoples of Flores, Solor, Adonara, and Timor. However, it is only among the eastern Manggarai and

Riung that these notions occur in connection with an explicit association of **nitu** with the term **mata** .

In the eastern Indonesian regions mentioned just above, water, or rather a spring, can also be regarded as a point of transition or a boundary. On Solor, Adonara, and in east Flores and the Ngadha region of central Flores, the spring is the abode of the **nitu**. When humans violate their habitat the **nitu** punish them with various catastrophes, including floods, earthquakes, illness, and death. Illness and death follow from the capture of the soul by the **nitu**. The violations of the habitat of the **nitu** include talking to, laughing at, or killing a creature that physically manifests the **nitu**, e.g. snakes, or simply talking out loud at a water source. In the context of punishment for violating the abode of the spirits, the **nitu** may be regarded as regulators or sources of order, for it seems to be precisely actions which are not in accordance with human social order or proper cultural behaviour that precipitate the disasters. So it would seem that the **nitu** spirits embody the destructive potential of water which manifests itself only if the boundary between the the human and the spirit realm is breached. In certain respects this boundary may be viewed as that of between culture and nature; more specifically, human cultural activity can be seen as being inappropriate in the natural habitat of the **nitu** spirits.

Water can be regarded as a point of transition and associated with the concept of 'source' in yet another sense. As noted earlier, the Ngadha subscribe to the notion that the entrance to the abode of **nitu**, the **bata nitu** (**bata**= gate, entrance to a village; Arndt 1961:15),, is located at a spot where the water breaks ground; or in other words, at the source of the spring (van Staveren 1916:132). This is thought to be the site where the **nitu** emerge into the human world at noon to sunbathe (Arndt 1956:423). Furthermore, it is through the spring that the spirits of the dead travel to their new home, the land of the **nitu** (Arndt 1930:826). As I discussed earlier among the Ngadha, spirits of the deceased are identified with nature spirits .

The **nitu** are also closely associated with a complex of ideas that include snakes, springs, the rainbow, and gold (or wealth in general), a complex that is often associated with points of transition. Before I discuss this complex in relation to **nitu**, I should mention several points raised by Endicott (1970:134-137) which bear upon the association of gold (and metal in general) and points of transition. In the context of Malay magic, metals tend to reinforce boundaries. Their hardness and durability are their operative features in this connection. As will become clearer below, gold and items of wealth are thought to be guarded by the **nitu** spirits on the island of Flores. In the sense that gold is guarded at the spot where the rainbow joins the earth, therefore at the spot which is the boundary between the human and the spirit realms, these items may be seen as reinforcers of the boundary between the spirit and the human realm. The **nitu** are also associated with the rainbow, and its colours are often connected with that of gold or the reflection of gold. Endicott (1970:136) also suggests water to be something which symbolically facilitates passage across boundaries, while transforming the thing or person crossing the boundary. The rainbow functions in a similar manner, as a connecting bridge between the human and spirit realms (Endicott 1970:136). In the discussion to follow, these associations with water, snakes, rainbow, and gold will become evident among the various Indonesian groups, as these pertain to the category of **nitu**, the nature spirits. It should be noted, moreover, that a connection between treasure and the rainbow and guardian snakes is encountered in many parts of the world.

Among the East Florinese the place where the rainbow joins the earth marks the entrance to the abode of the **nitu** (Arndt 1951:58). As noted, the rainbow is believed to be their treasure and wealth hung out to dry (ibid:68). In this region, there is also a belief that the place where the rainbow joins the earth is where a wealthy person was buried with his treasures, and that it is this wealth which the rainbow snake spirit guards (Bader 1971:952). The rainbow thus marks a point of transition between the spirit and the human world, and

in certain respects the treasures (most probably mainly gold) would be the items which reinforce or define this boundary.

The idea of the rainbow as a transition between the human and spirit realms is also found in the Lio region of central Flores where, as mentioned earlier, the rainbow is regarded as the object which facilitates passage between the sky and the earth. It is believed that when it begins to rain, the god **Guru Giwa** rides his horse (**djara nitu,** "spirit horse") over the rainbow as if it were a bridge. Also, on the day a rainbow appears, the fields are not to be worked or the crops will fail (ibid).We also learn from Bader (ibid:953) that a spring is thought by the Lionese to be inhabited by **nitu niba**, the rainbow spirit. Here it is relevant that **nitu niba** refers to the rainbow among the Ngadha of Flores.

In the Nagé region of Flores the rainbow is similarly associated with the snake-horse representation of the water spirits (Bader 1971:950-951). The rainbow, represented as a horse, also assists the souls of the dead in their transition to the divinity, **Gae Dewa,** in the sky (Bader 1970:950). This snake or horse inhabits a water source or spring (ibid:950-51). The weapons of the malevolent **noa** spirits are also manifest as the rainbow, in this case called **nitu bari todho,** and **nitu noa boka wae** (ibid:952). The former is the 'aggressive rainbow spirit', the rainbow which is incomplete. It holds danger for children and dogs. The latter expression in contrast refers to the 'well-disposed rainbow', the complete rainbow. It is dangerous only for water buffalo, horses, and swine.

In the form of a rainbow, the **nitu** spirits can also be regarded as the source of rain, since, if offended, the rainbow is thought to withhold the rains and thus cause a drought which destroys the fields (ibid:952). As the snake, the rainbow is believed to eat children; and the same supposedly happens to anyone disturbing it drinking at the spring (ibid:953,955).

As was mentioned in Chapter Two, a myth from Bo'a Wae in the Nagé region indicates that the **nitu** are associated with material wealth as well, and more specifically with gold (Forth 1989, pers. comm.). In the myth, the **nitu** are furthermore associated with snakes

and more specifically with the python, which can be understood as a physical manifestation of the **nitu**. Lalo Sue, the hero, is said to be swallowed and vomited up by a python. According to Forth, this event parallels the hero's entry and return from the underwater village of the **nitu**, which immediately follows the incident with the snake. Although in this myth there is no association with rainbow, we do find a connection with gold, snake, and a body of water.

The Ngadha regard the rainbow to be the "half-mature" **nitu**, **nitu niba**, that emerge from the earth or the spring to ask for rain (Arndt 1930:844). These spirits also rise in the form of the rainbow in order to stop the rainfall when it has been raining too long (Bader 1971:948). Furthermore, the rainbow is conceived to be the clothing of the **nitu**, which was hung out to dry, or their gold jewelry with which they pay bridewealth (ibid:948-949).[5] Bader (1971:954-955) further indicates that the point of conjunction between the earth and the rainbow is the place of a **nitu** village. Here swarms of bees are thought to be maidens who weave the cloth of the **nitu**. In the house of the **nitu** great treasures are stored and protected. I mentioned earlier that the **nitu** can also assume the form of snakes in Ngadha and elsewhere.

In Rembong and Rajong, in the eastern Manggarai region of Flores,the rainbow is conceived to consist of intertwined snakes, the manifestation of the water spirits, **nitu waeq**, on which the spirits ride as if crossing a bridge (Erb 1987:187; Bader 1971:951). Whoever sees a rainbow goes insane. Bader (1970:951) also tells us that in Manggarai the rainbow is thought to be composed of various colored snakes over which the earth spirits ride just as one rides over a bridge. The appearance of a rainbow is moreover thought to be a sign or omen that a wealthy man will die (Bader 1971:952). Thus, again, the rainbow is a kind of boundary between the domains of humanity and the spirits, and is associated with wealth.There is, furthermore, a connection between springs and gold in eastern Manggarai. In one of the myths, Erb (ibid:187) recounts how the uncle of an unfortunate girl who married a water spirit, upon trying to pull her back from the spring, pulled out a

gold gourd instead. Here, I would interpret the gold as representing bridewealth for the girl.

In a similar manner, there is a connection between the spring and gold also in the Ngadha region. Arndt (1931:357) records a myth concerning the transformation of a captured wild pig into gold, and the emergence of a spring where the hunter tries to roast it. As I shall discuss in Chapter Five, as a game animal, the wild pig is identified with the **nitu** who are the owners of the game.Thus, in this account we again encounter an association of gold, springs, and **nitu**.

The Ngadha also believe that the place where the rainbow joins the earth is especially sacred and mostly dangerous (Bader 1971:954). As this is the site of the **nitu**'s abode, illness, death, and misfortune are associated with this place; but so too is good fortune. The ambiguous nature of this spot is implicit in the nature of the site as a boundary between the spirit and the human world. As Douglas (1966) has argued, anomalous or marginal places or categories tend to be connected with notions of both sacredness and danger in many cultures.

The connection between **nitu** and items of wealth such as gold and other treasures, as well as cloth, should be considered in yet another way. Gold and cloth are often exchanged as bridewealth and counter-prestation. Bridewealth payments are a compensation for the loss of the female member of the wife-giving group. The bride, however, ensures the continuity of the wife-taking group by producing offspring. Therefore, the items of bridewealth may be seen as a means by which a group regenerates itself. As shown, notions of generative potential are also connected with the **nitu** and the rainbow.

The places where the rainbow appears, therefore, are conceived to be both sources of fortune and misfortune (Bader 1971). If rules and regulations are not observed, illness and death follows; that is, discontinuity results. Thus, the nature spirits that are intimately connected with rainbows and wealth can also be regarded as sources of both continuity and discontinuity, of conjunction and disjunction. In the context of the ambiguous nature of

nitu, it should be mentioned that the Ngadha also view the **nitu niba**, the rainbow spirit, as one source of infidelity. Thus, it is believed that this spirit can seduce a man's wife while he is away. This **nitu** is called **nitu pela**, 'the **nitu** who leads to sexual offense', or **nitu weko**,'the **nitu** who copulates' (Bader 1971:950). It can therefore be argued that the **nitu** are also a source of illicit sexuality, and thus of disorder, so that the ambiguous nature of **nitu** is attested in this respect as well.

Of comparative interest are ideas concerning snakes,water, wealth, and rainbow among Kédangese of Lembata in eastern Indonesia, as these notions are very similar tc the ones discussed just above. According to Barnes (1974:60-61,105-108), the Kédangese make a connection between gold and water. In their myths, the spring of the village emerged from a golden pot (ibid:58,59). Barnes interprets the connection between these two elements in terms of the idea that 'gold is like a fluid which emerges from things and crosses the boundaries of bodies' (ibid:61), so that the two concepts are associated with points of transition. The rainbow is believed to rise from the golden pot at the source of the spring (ibid:105). The rainbow is furthermore thought to rise from the mouth of a snake that is the guardian of the spring. Barnes (1974:106) also draws an equation between wealth of all forms (clothing, jewelry, ivory tusks, and so on), products of the field, meat, gold, and fluids of life. In addition, he claims that this set is associated with snakes, luminosity, and spirit (ibid). In this connection it might be mentioned that in Rindi, in eastern Sumba, radiance is a feature of spirits in general (Forth 1981:76,78,79).

As among the Kédang of Lembata, among the various groups of Flores the same or very similar equivalences can be found in ideas regarding gold (wealth), rainbow, water, and snakes. In Flores, however, this complex is firmly associated with the **nitu** spirits; whereas in Kédang the term **nitu** is not encountered at all.

The association of the **nitu** with yet another physical substance necessary to life, namely the earth, further identifies them as a source of the generative power for fields and humanity. The crops of the fields nourish humans, so that the **nitu** are indirectly the

source of life for humanity; and thus of continued biological existence and continuity. The abode of the **nitu** is often believed to be beneath the earth. For example, on Solor and Adonara, one abode of the **nitu** is holes in the earth. In East Flores too, the abode of the **nitu** or **nitung** is the earth. The Ili Mandiri give offerings to and ask for assistance from the **nitung** in practices related to cultivation. The fertility of their fields and successful crop yield are thought to be in the hands of the **nitung**, since in a sense it is they who had to surrender part of their abode, the earth as a whole, for cultivation. The four major **nitu** on Tanebar-Evav are thought to be the source of success of the millet fields. In the Sikka region of Flores, the **nitu** are believed to appear in dreams and teach humans about such practical skills as agriculture. The site for cultivation is also chosen through divination and offerings to the **nitu** (Arndt 1932:216). The protection and the prosperity of the fields are also dependent on the **nitu**, and for this reason they are given many offerings during the various stages of the agricultural cycle (ibid:216,218,221,226,229). In Lio, in central Flores, the productivity of the fields is similarly thought to be closely associated with the **nitu pai** (Arndt 1939,1944).

In the Ngadha region of Flores, the primary dwelling place of the **nitu** is, as noted, beneath the earth. The **ngebu cuma** are a type of **nitu**. They are thought to be guardians of the cultivated fields, and the prosperity of the fields is connected with their protective and generative power (Arndt 1937:364). It should be recalled that the term **ngebu** is an apparent cognate of PAN ***e(m)pu**, 'ancestor' (Dempwolff 1938:51), and is semantically related to PAN ***puhun**, 'base', 'trunk', 'source'. Thus, as discussed earlier, the **ngebu cuma** may be regarded as a 'source'; that is, the source of fertility and protection for the fields. Most of the offerings connected with cultivation in Ngadha are addressed either to the ancestors or to **Nitu Déva**. As I discussed earlier, the Ngadha ancestral spirits are identified with the nature spirits, since both are called **nitu**; and because the spirits of the deceased seem to become nature spirits which reside beneath the earth. Furthermore, according to Arndt (1930:825), the term **nitu** originally meant earth among the Ngadha. He cites an informant

who claimed that the human body was created from the earth, **nitu**, by the divinity, **Déva**.Thus the earth came to be regarded as the mother, and **Déva**, the sky god, the father of humanity (ibid).[6] In the linguistic sense, however, **nitu** cannot originally have meant earth. Thus, the informant most probably offered Arndt a figurative or symbolic interpretation by equating the abode of the spirits, namely the earth, with the **nitu** themselves.

Some other informants of Arndt claimed that humanity originated from a primeval union of **Nitu**, the Earth Mother, and **Déva**, the sky god. **Nitu**, the Earth Mother, is conceived to be the protector of the earth and the guardian of her human children. She is regarded as a nurturing mother. She is also the source of game, and the source of fertility of the fields -- rain being thought of as her milk which nourishes humanity through the crops.

In this association of **nitu** with the earth, it is implicit that the **nitu** are the sources of vegetative regeneration, a source of nourishment for mankind and his livestock. The earth is regarded as the mother of all life and the source of nurture that secures the continuity of life, which indirectly provides for the reproduction of society itself. In addition, although the Ngadha believe in a number of places where the dead are supposed to dwell, one of these places is thought to be beneath the earth. The earth, therefore, provides for a spiritual continuity even after the physical body disintegrates. Since life originates in the earth and is returned to the earth at death, it is an appropriate symbol for the cycle of life; and thus the association of **nitu** with the earth is significant. In the light of the other aspects of **nitu**, both as ancestral and nature spirits, they appear therefore to be intimately associated with cyclical affairs focusing on sources of life, continuity, and generative potential .

Another association of **nitu**, as nature spirits, with the notion of source or origin can be found in their association with trees. As I have earlier pointed out, trees, and particularly large trees, are thought to be one of the dwelling places of the **nitu**. In some parts of central Flores, as among the Ngadha, the word **puu**, which generally refers to the trunk of a tree,

also simply designates an entire tree (Arndt 1961:436). This reflex of the PAN ***puhun**, however, can also mean 'source', 'origin', 'basis' (Dempwolff 1938:120). Thus the **nitu** can further be linked with the notion of source on these grounds as well.

III

So far I have been mainly concerned with the positive aspects of **nitu**; that is, with their life-conferring potential which provides for both physical and social continuity. However, the **nitu** also embody a destructive potential that brings about discontinuity, as I briefly discussed while considering the connection between **nitu** and water. In what follows I shall focus on this negative aspect of **nitu**, and consider how it can be reconciled with the positive aspect of this concept.

As was pointed out earlier, the **nitu** punish those who trespass on or violate their domain by various means, including storms, floods, illness, death, and other misfortune. I also suggested that human, cultural behaviour is not tolerated in the realm or abode of the spirits; and that such violation will bring on destruction by the **nitu** .

There is yet another side to the destructive nature of **nitu**, which takes the form of what I shall call human-spirit marriage. As noted, in Borneo there is a belief in a certain kind of **antu**, the **antu koklir**, that metamorphose into voluptuous women[7] who seduce and emasculate men (Jensen 1974:95; Sather 1978:311-355). These are the spirits of women who died in childbirth, and who blame their premature death on men. The **antu buyu**, which in contrast do not have a human origin, are nature spirits which assume a human appearance in order to seduce women, resulting in the death of the woman's offspring (Sather 1978).

As discussed earlier, on Roti, also, the **buntiana** or **nitu kak** are thought to be the spirits of women who died in childbirth. They are believed to attack women in childbirth and thus cause their demise. The **nitu kak** can also appear as a beautiful woman[8] who has teeth lining her vagina. She seduces men and emasculates them. It might be noted here that

buntiana appears to be a borrowing of the Malay word **pontianak**, which refers to "transformations of still-born children" (Endicott 1970:61). The Malay **pontianak**, in a similar manner to the Rotinese **buntiana**, attack and kill the expectant mother and her unborn child (ibid:63).

It is of considerable interest that **buntiana** or **nitu kak** have very similar representations to the **antu koklir** of Borneo. This striking similarity, however, has not been mentioned either by Fox, Jensen, or Sather in their publications on this category of spirits. In both the Rotinese and Bornean cases these malevolent spirits can furthermore manifest themselves as owls, and are believed to attack or eliminate the source of life -- the mother, or the male genitals. These types of spirits thus all represent the negative aspect of the concept of **nitu** in that they provide for discontinuity .

On both Roti and Borneo, it would appear, moreover, that the destruction that results in discontinuity is the result of an event that went against the natural order of life. Thus, the women who became spirits died a premature death without having the chance to raise and nourish their children. These spirits therefore act in every manner that is contrary to human order. They attack mothers to be, seemingly out of envy of the full life they are going to establish by raising their children. The seduction and emasculation of men, on the other hand, can be seen as the result of the blame these spirits place on men for their own untimely demise.

The same theme of spirit-human marriage also appears among various groups on the island of Flores. In East Flores, the **nitu** assume a human appearance, generally that of a relative (a husband or a brother) of an individual who violated the habitat of the **nitu**, in order to punish her or him. This punitive act takes the form of offering of food or drink, which when accepted or consumed results in death (Arndt 1951:21-24). The **nitu** will appear as a person of the opposite sex from the trespasser. The human female may get pregnant from the drink offered to her, and she will consequently give birth to snakes. After giving birth to snakes -- a form **nitu** commonly assume -- she will die. In this connection, it

should be noted that the theme of getting pregnant by drinking water from a 'wild' place is a common theme in eastern Indonesian myths. As an example, we might note a couple of eastern Sumbanese (Rindi) myths recorded by C.E. Forth (1982:185-196,415) which display this theme. Forth notes the remarkable similarity of these myths to a tale recorded by Friedberg (1978:146-167), which is current among the Bunaq of Timor.

The **nitu** of East Flores, then, cause discontinuity in the human world by the death of the human female, while they ensure the continuity of their own world by claiming their snake offspring. However, the **nitu** seem to cause discontinuity only if the cosmic order has been breached. They punish when their domain, a particular part of the natural world, has been violated by cultural action. The form of punitive action, in the context of the impregnation of the human female, also goes against the cosmic order. Thus destruction follows from the violation of the human-spirit boundary, and the world is thrust momentarily into a state of chaos.

Similar ideas are encountered among the Ngadha and the people of Rembong and Rajong of Flores. In the Ngadha region, the **nitu**, in the appearance of attractive humans,[9] seduce and take human spouses. Such a marriage has less serious consequences for the human male partner than for the female partner. The male only becomes ill after such liaison, but the female becomes pregnant and gives birth to snakes -- the physical form that the **nitu** usually assume here as well. The birth is also accompanied by heavy storms and flooding until the offspring are returned to the river; that is, to their **nitu** parent; or until the human female joins her spouse. It is implied in the literature (see, for example, Arndt 1936:906) that the human-spirit marriage and the subsequent storms and flooding are punishments for the violation of rules at the water source, the home of the **nitu**.This transgression is reported by the **nitu** to the Creator, **Déva**; and upon obtaining his permission the subsequent punishment begins. However, after the offspring and the human partner are returned to the **nitu** spouse, usually a new relationship is established between the **nitu** and the family of the human partner. For the human's family there may

be certain benefits, which may include assistance in the form of increased fertility of their fields, bountiful harvests, or some gifts from the nitu.

Among the Rembong and Rajong people of eastern Manggarai, there are similar ideas concerning nitu-human marriages (Erb 1987:185-187). The nitu usually appear as human males or snakes that seduce a human female in order to take her as a wife. The marriage is precipitated by violations of the nitu's abode such as urinating in the forest or bathing in the spring. Rain and flooding are the usual results, and these do not cease until the human partner joins her nitu spouse. Their offspring are usually represented as snakes. In connection with the human-spirit marriage, there is a restructuring of human and spirit relations which is comparable to the above mentioned Ngadha case.

Illness, death, storms, flooding, and the removal of a member of the human community -- usually the female, the source of life -- are the results of a nitu - human marriage.[10] As noted in Chapter Two, these events can be regarded as instances of the so-called 'thunder complex' (see Blust 1981; Forth 1989). These catastrophes tend to be conceived as punitive actions precipitated by the violation of the realm of the nitu. The transgression and the subsequent human-spirit marriage are not in accord with the order of the cosmos. The human-spirit boundary is breached , and this event results in chaos. The storms and flooding are reminiscent of a primeval condition of undifferentiation and potentiality for creation. From the destruction and discontinuity comes the potential for new life, new relations, and a new order. In this regard, it should be noted that among the Ngadha there are certain rain rituals which require a symbolic mating with a frog in order to bring about rainfall after a long drought (Arndt 1931:729,735). As the frog is one manifestation of the nitu spirits (Arndt 1930:826), this concept would indicate that in these rain rituals there is a symbolic nitu-human marriage taking place; and accordingly that the cosmic order is breached on purpose in order to initiate rainfall.

In this context the relationship between humans and nitu can be seen to be cyclical. After a breach of the spirit and human boundary there is a restructuring of the relationship

and of the boundary itself. The two realms become differentiated again. As we have seen from earlier discussions, the **nitu** are the source of life. The violation of their realm may thus be regarded as an impairment of the source of life, so that the result is destruction and discontinuity. Thus, mistreating a **nitu**, especially marrying one, might be regarded as something comparable to commiting incest, another categorical confusion, which also results in storms and flooding in different parts of Southeast Asia (see, for example, Barnes 1974:63).

The foregoing discussion of the various representations of **nitu** indicates that the **nitu** may be best understood as things symbolic of the sources of both continuity and discontinuity. The category of **nitu** embraces the potential for creation, or rather regeneration; but also the potential for destruction. Although in certain respects an ambiguous class, the **nitu** in general, and especially in the eastern Indonesian context, tend to be associated with the notions of fertility and regeneration and thus continuity. The **nitu** may also be regarded as sources of order, both natural and cultural. As regards cultural order, I refer particularly to the association of **nitu** with the collective ancestral spirits and the part played by ancestors in the lives of their descendants. Punishment and the resulting discontinuity in life are the results of breaching cosmic order, and of mixing categories that belong to the spirit or human realm respectively. Connected with this concept is the association of **nitu** with points of transition, and the apparent function of these spirits as regulators of the boundary between the realms of spirits and humans.

There is also a cyclical association of the category of **nitu** which is manifest in the connection of **nitu** with life cycle rites and agricultural cycles. This cyclical association is furthermore implicit in the relationship between the **nitu**, humans, and cosmic order. The initial order of the cosmos is upset and is returned to chaos and undifferentiation when the cosmic order has been breached through the human violation of the spirit realm. A reordering of the cosmos results from the restructuring of relations between the **nitu** and humans so that the cycle continues.

Before concluding this chapter, a few points might be made concerning some differences in the concept of **nitu** as between Western Malayo-Polynesian and Central Malayo-Polynesian speakers. The generative potential of **nitu** in connection with the fertility of agricultural fields appears to be associated with head-hunting among the Iban and Bare'e, who are both Western Malayo-Polynesian speakers. Among most of the Central Malayo-Polynesian speakers, on the other hand, the fertility-conferring power of the **nitu** in the context of cultivation is connected with the association of these spirits with the physical substances of life -- rain, earth, water sources. Although the Atoni of Timor, who are Central Malayo-Polynesian speakers, do practice head-hunting, the motive for this practice is to increase the **nitu** population. Therefore, it it would appear that the fertility-conferring power of the **nitu** for the cultivated fields has a different expression among the WMP and CMP groups. However, the two forms can be seen as structurally equivalent, since among both linguistic subgroups the **nitu** are the source of generative potential for the fields and also for humanity, and thus the source of physical continuity of the society in question.

Another difference between these two linguistic groups concerns the mode of operation of the **nitu** with regard to punishment resulting in illness or death. Thus, the **nitu** tend to cause sickness by way of spirit possession among the Apayo, Lepanto, and Bagobo of the Philippines, the Iban of Borneo, and the Bare'e of Sulawesi, all WMP speakers. The transgressor is believed to become possessed by the **nitu**, which take control of the patient, who then slowly dies. Among the CMP speaking populations, in contrast, it is usually soul-capture, as opposed to possession, which is the mode of inflicting illness or death (see for example ideas found in Tanebar-Evav, East Flores, and the Ngadha and Riung regions of Flores).

As one possible exception to this pattern, I might mention an expression found among the Ngadha of Flores which might indicate spirit possession. Thus, Arndt (1961:360; 1930:851) records the Ngadha phrase **nitu kono**, which he translates as "In Besitz

genommen von **nitu**, sehr alte Frau" (1961:360). The expression refers to a very old woman who was taken into possession by the **nitu**. "Taken into possession" may simply be interpreted as having claimed a 'property'. On the other hand, **kono** means 'to enter' (Arndt 1961:264) so the expression may be translated as 'to be entered by **nitu**'; which could imply possession. Arndt, however, does not elaborate this point. Only one further datum suggests the idea of possession, and this concerns illness caused by the ancestors. Thus, in his article "Krankenheit und Krankenheitsursachen", Arndt (1956:434-435) cites a healer as saying, "Du hast einen **Nitu** im Schädel; Kopfschmerzen kommen von **Nitu**" [You have a **Nitu** in the skull; the headaches come from the **Nitu**]. Since the general mode of inflicting disease and death in this society is soul capture, however, and because the evidence for spirit possession appears to be inconclusive to say the least, I would conclude that the Ngadha probably resemble other CMP speakers in this context more than they do the WMP speakers. Indeed, in Ngadha an offending individual's soul is also said to be captured and retained by the **nitu**, thus causing the physical body slowly to wither and die. In addition, as for other CMP speakers, soul capture for the Ngadha is by far the most common way of explaining illness. It may further be mentioned in this connection that among the Ngadha, witches are also said to capture people's souls.

In summary, in this chapter I have shown the connection between **nitu** and the themes of 'source, origin', and 'continuity' by considering the various representations and symbolic associations of the concept of **nitu** among Austronesian-speaking societies. At the same time, I have considered the material expressions of the nature of **nitu**, and in particular the physical structure of a principal house of a descent group or village temple. These structures, as I have shown, can be identified with the **nitu** and more especially with their generative powers that ensure the continuity of society. In the next Chapter, I will compare the idea of **nitu** with categories of spirits that are not called **nitu** which are found in mainland Southeast Asia and in other Austronesian-speaking societies. These other

categories of spirits appear to be very similar or even identical to the **nitu**, structurally and/or in the ways in which they are represented.

CHAPTER FOUR: COMPARATIVE CONSIDERATIONS OF CATEGORIES OF SPIRITS RESEMBLING NITU AMONG SOME NON-AUSTRONESIAN AND AUSTRONESIAN GROUPS

In the previous Chapter we have seen how **nitu** are connected with the concept of 'source' or 'origin', and 'continuity'. In other parts of Southeast Asia similar ideas are held about certain classes of spirits that are called by terms other than **nitu**. However, despite the difference of names a review of the ethnographic literature concerning these other categories of spirits is of considerable comparative interest. In this chapter I will consider in particular the **phii** and **nat**[1] spirits of Thailand and Burma respectively. I shall also be concerned with the representation of the earth deity of the Batek Negrito of Malaysia. The similarities and differences of the representation of spirits that resemble **nitu** are of interest especially since these are non-Austronesian-speaking societies. After this, I shall consider certain classes of nature spirits and ancestral spirits among the Ngaju Dayak (Borneo), Kédang (Lembata), Rindi (Sumba), Mambai (Timor), and Sa'dan Toraja (Sulawesi) groups of Indonesia, and also among the Merina of Madagascar, all of which speak Austronesian languages.

With the exception of the Merina, the groups I have chosen to consider with respect to spirit categories comparable to **nitu**, are all societies that are situated within Southeast Asia. My reason for doing this comparison is based on apparent cultural similarities between mainland and insular Southeast Asian groups. As P.E. de Josselin de Jong (1965:289) has suggested, such a comparative endeavour may prove to be useful, as his examination of agricultural rituals throughout both mainland and insular Southeast Asia has indicated the presence of apparently similar culture complexes. He thus suggests that a cultural unity may be discovered if research is conducted along these comparative thematic lines, rather than strictly along the lines of area studies which are usually defined by land and political frontiers.

It should be noted, furthermore, that both mainland and insular Southeast Asia were subject to common historical and cultural influences, especially to that of Hindu-Buddhist civilization. Via sea-faring traders religious ideas, literature, and agricultural practices have disseminated to Southeast Asia from India, China, and the Arabian peninsula (Dutt 1985:1). Thus these common cultural and historical bonds might also define this geographical region as an area for comparative study, despite the differences that we encounter between Austronesian- and non-Austronesian-speaking communities inhabiting mainland and insular Southeast Asia.

I

Thailand and Burma

The **phii** spirits of Thailand are conceived to be the transformed spirits of the dead, and free spirits that can primarily be considered as nature spirits (Tambiah 1970:263; Attagara 1967:37). The spirits of the dead are fundamentally collective ancestral spirits lacking any genealogical structuring. These ancestral **phii** are the guardian spirits of the house, **phii ruan**. Propitiation of these **phii** will secure the protection of the inhabitants from thieves, illness, and misfortune.(Attagara,1967:54-58) The guardian spirits of the village or compound are also ancestral **phii**. Tapubaan and Chao Phaù Phraa Khao are conceived to be the 'grandparents', 'fathers', or 'ancestors' of the village. These **phii** protect the villagers from outside enemies. The guardian spirits are also involved in biannual agricultural rites and in healing rites. There exists, furthermore, a notion that the ancestral spirits only punish when "they are in danger of being forgotten and when the unity of their children is threatened "(ibid:315).

The **phii**, as nature spirits, dwell in the mountains, rivers, streams, pools, forests, trees, rice fields, uncultivated fields, or in other words in all natural abodes (Tambiah 1970:316; Attagara 1967:63-67). These **phii** are believed to be fundamentally malevolent.

They punish all trespassers in their abode unless placated beforehand. They are not solicited for favours, and are only contacted so that they will not attack humans. The spirits of the rice fields are said to attack the villagers unless propitiated before ploughing and harvest, in which case they become guardians of the field. The forest and tree **phii** must be given an offering before cutting down trees. They also control fishing and hunting (Attagara 1967:66). A particular type of forest **phii** is also believed to own tigers, which he transforms into beautiful women in order to lure people down from their shelters up in the trees and then consume them, in the form of a tiger. All **phii**, both natural and ancestral, also cause all manner of illness by possession.

The **phii** representation is very similar in a number of ways to that of **nitu**. The **phii** are conceived to be both ancestral and nature spirits. As ancestral spirits they are thought to act as providers of health and nourishment for their descendants. In certain respects they can be viewed as the source of humanity, the source of life for their descendants and their fields; that is, ancestral **phii** can be considered as a source of continuity for the living, as they tend to be regarded as protectors, and because they are involved in agricultural and healing rites which secure the physical well being and corporeal continuity of their descendants. As guardians of the fields and proprietors of fishing and game, the nature spirits can similarly be understood in this context. The power of the **phii** to cause illness by possession is also very similar to some of the notions of illness in certain WMP-speaking groups of Indonesia. Therefore, in some ways the **phii** appear to resemble closely the **nitu** both in respect of the various conceptual associations and in their symbolic representation.

There is, however, a fundamental and very important difference between the **phii** and **nitu**. The **nitu**'s favor is actively sought through offerings and sacrifices, especially in the eastern Indonesian context, where **nitu** tend to be identified as both ancestral and nature spirits. Even the nature spirits (**nitu**) only punish for inappropriate behaviour in their abode, and just for passing through their territory no propitiation is necessary.[2] The **nitu** can also be regarded as generally benevolent and the source of continuity and generative,

life-giving potential. On the other hand the **phii** are generally malevolent, and are avoided rather than solicited. The **phii** have to be constantly propitiated or they will cause destruction and discontinuity. Even as guardian spirits, the success of the fields, and the health and welfare of the household and the village is only granted by the **phii** if propitiated. It is fear of their power that prompts their placation.

Although the representation of **phii** is rather similar to the **nitu**, these spirit concepts are moreover part of two very different cosmologies. Here, I am particularly concerned with that aspect of cosmology which defines the relation of the people to the supernatural, to nature, and to order in the universe. Thus, I would interpret the Thai view as one in which the world is always on the brink of chaos; and only through constant offerings is order and continuity ensured. Thus, here the cycle goes from chaos to order to chaos. In contrast, in the Austronesian, and particularly in the eastern Indonesian cosmology, the world appears to be conceived more as a constantly ordered place; and life and continuity are only threatened by human acts that breach this order. Thus, the cycle progresses from order to chaos to order. The **phii** are therefore similar to the **nitu** only in regard to certain ways the two are represented. In structural terms the **phii** are rather dissimilar to the **nitu**, since the **phii** can be seen to be primarily sources of discontinuity as opposed to continuity.

The **nat** spirits of Burma are quite similar to the Thai **phii** spirits. Some **nats** are believed to be the spirits of deceased humans (Sway Yoe 1896; Enriquez 1923; Spiro 1967). These **nats** are the spirits of those women who died in childbirth; and of those who died a violent, sudden, and unnatural death (Sway Yoe 1896:476; Enriquez 1923:30,32; Spiro 1967:41,51). According to Stevenson (1944:28), the **nats** are believed to have the same characteristi s as humans; and the same tendency to favour those they like and to pester those whom they dislike. They are generally thought to be malevolent, a characteristic which tends to be attributed to their sudden demise (Spiro 1967:41). These **nats** belong to the so-called "thirty-seven" **nats** of the Burmese. In certain respects they are ancestral **nats**,

but only in a collective sense; i.e., they are not ancestors of specific groups or individuals. As ancestral **nats** they are classified into four kinds: the house **nats**, village **nats**, hereditary **nats**, and personal guardian **nats.**

The house **nat** protects the members of the household from intruders and fever. It is a very powerful **nat** which if properly palacated will guard and protect. However, if not propitiated, it can cause a range of misfortunes from accident to death. The material presence of the house **nat** is represented by the coconut hanging in each house. This coconut is, at the same time, a representation of the residence of, as well as an offering to, the **nat** (Spiro 1967:92). This **nat** is usually propitiated out of fear for the welfare of the household. There is a special offering for it at a newborn child's cradle ceremony; out of fear for the newborn's life and, at the same time, to acquire protection for the new household member. Thus, again at a surface level it seems the **nat** is the source of continuity and welfare of the household. However, this 'guardian' **nat** can also represent the source of discontinuity, since the household's welfare and continued existence is secured only through 'bribing' the **nat** not to turn his power against the household members.

The guardian **nat** of the village operates on the same principle, keeping enemies, witches, and illness out if propitiated. A group of villagers share one village **nat.** The village **nat** is regarded as "the great grandfather". At the entrance of a village there is a shrine to the village **nat** where offerings are placed. It contains a white wooden horse which is the material representation of this **nat,** (or rather of the horse he supposedly rides). To secure his protection, offerings are continually made to the village **nat.** In addition, he enjoys special offerings at the marriage ceremony, and when a novice joins the Buddhist monastery (Spiro 1967:97). Both the house and the village **nats**, therefore, are involved in certain life cycle ceremonies. However, this role in the life cycle rites should not be taken to mean that these guardian **nats** are the source of continuity through the different stages of life, as seems to be the case with **nitu**, where **nitu** are involved with life cycle rites. Rather,

these occasions of placation should be understood as extra measures taken to ward off the malevolent power of these **nats**.

Sway Yoe (1896:234) also makes reference to a feast which is held every three or four years in honor of the village **nat**. At this occasion the **nat kadow**, a woman who is called the **nat**'s wife, dances in order to ward off illness and to secure the welfare of the villagers. The **nats** in general are said to take human wives, who become shamans (Spiro 1967:158). In comparison, the **nitu**, at least among the CMP speaking populations, neither possess or marry shamans. As I have noted earlier, however, among some of the WMP speaking groups the shamans or mediums are possessed by **nitu** spirits for the purpose of communication.

Some **nats** are also conceived to be nature spirits. They inhabit trees, forest, fields, streams, and the like. These **nats** are rather possessive of their territory, and cause various sorts of harm to the trespasser. Certain observances are in effect in their abode and an offering is required to ward off their malevolence. The motivation for the propitiation of these **nats** is to secure protection from them, and to gain the **nat**'s assistance in human endeavours in the domain of the **nat** so as to protect oneself from other causes of harm. In the sense of gaining their assistance and protection, the **nats** also function as guardians; that is, guardians of the forest, field, hill, and so on. The punitive agents of the field, hill, or forest **nats** are snakes and tigers (ibid:48). These animals might be regarded as the physical manifestations of these nature **nats**, although the literature does not always make this clear.

These latter kind of **nats** tend to be conceived as female. **Nats** associated with the fields and harvest send snakes t[illegible]he villagers if they have not been propitiated. Good harvests, sufficient rai[illegible]tiful supply of water are also dependent on the harvest **nat** (Spiro 1967:50). The [illegible]sociation with rain, water supply, and the fecundity of the fields, as well as the feminine character of the field **nats** are reminiscent of the feminine,

generative representations of **nitu**. However, once again this attribute of the **nat** is only secured by offerings.

The **nats** possess humans if they wish to communicate with them; to do harm, for example by causing illness; or to take a human spouse when the **nat** falls in love. Possession that results in illness is again very similar to possession by certain categories of **nitu** among the WMP speakers of Indonesia. In contrast to the ideas about **nitu**-human marriage in eastern Indonesia, however, in Burma the motive for such marriages is not punishment for violating the realm of the spirits, which is a violation of the cosmic order, and thus of the boundary between the spirit and the human realms. Here, the human-spirit marriage may be seen as a realization of the **nat**'s romantic interests in the human female. As I mentioned earlier, the **nats** have definite human characteristics, so that male **nats** fall in love with a human females, who then become their wives and thus shamans.

As we have seen, the **nats** are conceived to be potentially dangerous. It is the fear of the harm they may cause which is the motive for their propitiation (Spiro 1967:47). Thus, the **nats** are a continual source of potential discontinuity, the potentiality for destruction of life and order. The generative power of the fields, the continuous supply of basic materials of physical existence, and the continuity of the human community are primarily dependent upon the proper propitiation of the **nats**. As in the case of the Thai **phii**, the world appears to be on the brink of chaos; and order and continuity of life are maintained only through placation of the spirit world. The **phii** and **nat** spirits may be very similar to **nitu** at the level of representations, but appear to be fundamentally different at the structural level, by which I mean the way these spirits are conceived in relation to humans, nature, and order in the universe.

Batek Negrito

Although they are not an Austronesian but an Austro-Asiatic speaking group, among the Batek Negrito of Malaysia we find ideas concerning a particular group of spirits which resemble the Austronesian category of **nitu**, both structurally and representationally. The Batek Negrito believe in an earth divinity, a **naga**, which is to say a snake, that resides below the earth (Endicott 1979:33). There are also many lesser **naga** inhabiting the river, pools, and underground sea. The earth deity, **naga**, is the source of fertility for the main crop, tubers. The **naga** is also thought to punish transgressions with thunderstorms and floods. Rain and rainbow are also associated with the **naga** (ibid:186-187). The rainbow represents "the reflection of the **naga** which is cast into the sky above" (ibid:186). To the **naga** are attributed the colors red, yellow, and green -- the major colors in the rainbow. The earth divinity's clothing is believed to be made of gold. Thus, the Batek Negrito earth divinity appears to be very similar to the **nitu** both in the way she is conceived and in the notions of reproductive power associated with her. The complex consisting of rainbow, snake, gold, and water source further confirms this similarity. The Batek Negrito category of earth deity thus clearly resembles the **nitu** of the Austronesian-speaking peoples, which may be attributed to the long exposure of these Malayan aboriginals to Malay influences. In contrast to the Burmese and Thai, therefore, the Batek Negrito show more similarity to Austronesian populations in their religion.

II

Below I shall discuss the categories of spirits among various Austronesian-speaking people that are called by a name other than **nitu**, yet show both structural and representational similarities to this category. The Ngaju Dayak of Borneo are interesting, not only because their ideas about certain categories of spirits are similar to those about **nitu**, but also because in this respect they are very similar to the Batek Negrito discussed

just above, and to some early Hindu spirit categories, particularly with respect to the notions of the **naga** snake.[3] The similarities to the Hindu ideas could perhaps be connected with the early historic Hindu influences on Southeast Asia. This connection, however, is likely to be significant only, or mostly, as far as the term **naga** is concerned; that is, it is probable that this Hindu term has displaced an indigenous Austronesian term that referred to a category of spirit which had a similar representation to that of the **naga**.

Borneo

The Ngaju Dayak representations of the underworld and the feminine deity and spirits inhabiting it, called **naga**, are similar to the **nitu** in a number of respects (Schärer 1963). The underworld is located beneath the earth, and entrance to it is gained through the depth of the river. This concept is reminiscent of ideas associated with the habitat of the **nitu** among the Ngadha of Flores. The water-snake, **naga**, is the representation of the inhabitants of the underworld. The river of the underworld is called the "river of heaped-up gold, of washed-up gold dust" (ibid:17). Therefore, the underworld is clearly connected with the idea of wealth. This association between river, snake, gold, and spirits seems identical to the complex discussed earlier in connection with **nitu**. There also exists a connection between the underworld, river, rain, **naga**, and rainbow (ibid:25-26), which further attests to this similarity. When it rains, the **naga** is said to come to the surface of the river to play; and the rainbow is the red glow of the evening and the reflection from the **naga**'s multicolored body. The rainbow is conceived to be a sign of "divine grace" and "salvation" (ibid), thus, perhaps, of the life-giving quality of the **naga**.

Among the Ngaju, the river and the underworld are also conceived to be a source of life in certain respects. The initiation of an individual into the community of the living or into the community of the dead involves a ritual bath in the river or in the mythical pool of eternal life respectively (ibid:86-87,143). Therefore, the water source is connected with generative potential. One of the myths recounted by Schärer (1963:144) concerning an

individual who upon death became a member of the 'sacred dead' also implies this quality of the river and the underworld. In this myth a human is transformed into a **naga** which descends to the bottom of the river. His descendants can request help from him in their worldly endeavours, particularly at the time of the harvest, in cases of illness,and in other times of distress. The fertility of the fields and the health and well-being of the community are therefore linked with this 'sacred' dead. As well, it appears that the spirits of the underworld are also associated or identified with the category of spirits called the 'sacred dead'.

The category of spirits which comprises the 'sacred dead' further advises the living in matters such as when to set out on a journey or on a head-hunting raid, and where to clear the forest to set up cultivated fields. They protect the crops against failure, provide a diagnosis in case of illness, and keep guard over the village against enemy attacks (ibid:149). However, not all the dead of Ngaju cosmology are strictly associated with the underworld. They are said to dwell in general in a place which is intermediate between the upperworld and the underworld.

The underworld and the spirits inhabiting it are also associated with destruction, either through an abundance of water or the lack of it. The most severe transgression against the cosmic order (i.e. incest, adultery, mocking animal representations of the spirit world) is punished through flooding and severe storms that either destroy the community or its crops; or by withholding rain and causing the death of the crops through drought. These modes of punishment and the actions that precipitate them are very similar to those found on Flores, Solor, and Adonara; and appear to belong to the earlier mentioned "thunder complex" (Blust 1981; Forth 1989). Therefore, in this context as well the spirits of the underworld are very similar to the **nitu**. Their punitive, destructive nature is only manifest when the cosmic order has been breached by mixing categories, which results in a negation of life. Thus the Ngaju spirits of the underworld can also be seen as maintainers of cosmic order.

The Ngaju association of the spirits of the underworld with the earth, rain, river, wealth, and the snake/rainbow complex is closely comparable to the associations of **nitu**, the nature spirits, elsewhere in Indonesia. The life-conferring and generative power of these spirits is further expressed in their association with the river and with life cycle rites. The river, in its association with the **nitu**, is the source of life and means of transformation for the Ngaju. The conception of some of the dead as sources of prosperity and continuity for the human community is also similar to some of the representations of **nitu** as the spirits of the deceased. Again, the notion of discontinuity resulting from breaking the cosmic order is encountered. The spirit realm of the underworld appears to be implicated in connection with discontinuity, since the most severe transgressions are punished through the destructive potential of water. Therefore, the Ngaju representation of the spirits of the underworld parallels that of the **nitu** spirits; and it entails certain structural similarities as well.

Since the fertility deities in early Hindu religion were also called **naga** or **nagas** and are in a number of ways similar not only to the Batek Negrito and Ngaju Dayak ideas about earth divinities, but also to the category of **nitu**, they deserve some comparative mention here. According to Bloss (1987:293-294), in early Hindu religion the **nagas** were fertility deities with fundamental importance for agriculture. The **nagas** were represented as snakes that inhabited trees, stones, streams, or pools. They were conceived to be the lords of the underworld. The **nagas** were associated with the fertility and wealth of a bounded territory. They were believed to control water, including the fluids of life and rain. The **nagas** were thought to protect gems and wealth which they bestowed on those they favored. If slighted they caused famine and disease. Thus, like the **nitu** spirits, the **nagas** were associated with the life-conferring qualities of rain, water sources, fluids of life, and gems. In a similar manner, the **nagas** exhibited an ambiguous nature, by distributing gems and wealth to those whom they favored but also punishing humans with famine and disease. The rainbow motif, however, seems to be missing in this area.

Since, as noted, the early Hindu representation of the **naga** is so strikingly similar to that of **nitu** as well as that of the **naga** of the Ngaju and Batek Negrito, the question might arise whether the Southeast Asian societies have simply borrowed the **naga** representation from Hindu religion. In the Batek Negrito and Ngaju case, however, an argument could be made that it was simply the term that was borrowed from India to designate the indigenous category of spirits which had a similar representation to the **naga**. More generally, it seems unlikely that the entire **naga** complex was borrowed from India, which the similarity between this spirit category and the **nitu** might suggest. For one thing, the term **nitu**, as I demonstrated, is an original Austronesian word. The category of **naga**, furthermore, is not associated with the spirits of the deceased, while as I have shown in Chapter Two, one of the principal meanings of **nitu** is as a reference to the spirits of the dead.

Such similarities as we encounter between the **naga** and **nitu** categories also raise the question of universal or 'natural' symbolism; that is, the fact that certain symbolic representations, such as that of the snake, seem to be encountered all over the world. In this regard, Needham (1967:283-84) suggests that

> certain things in nature seem to exert an effect on the mind, conducing to symbolic forms of the most general, and even universal, kind. ... This response, when translated (however variously) into language or ritual, constitutes a universal symbolism.

While Needham's notion of 'natural symbols' is not without its problems (see Freeman 1968), something like his approach seems to provide a better explanation of the similarities between Austronesian **nitu** and Indian **naga** than the simple assumption of massive diffusion between these two areas.

Lembata (CMP speakers).

Among the Kédang of Lembata, also, we find the themes of 'origin' and 'continuity' associated with a certain nature spirit. This spirit thus appears to be similar in many respects, both with regard to representations and structurally, to the **nitu**.

The **mier ringa** is conceived to be the guardian spirit of the village and also of the fields (Barnes 1974:49,138); the term **mier** has the connotation of protective spirit, while for **ringa** there is no translation (Barnes 1974:46). It is thought to occur as a snake, although at night it may appear in a human form (ibid:46). The **mier ringa** is further conceived as a unity comprising a male and female spirit (ibid). The Kédang associate this protective spirit with the centre of the village. The earth and the groves of trees at the village centre is its abode, so it is prohibited to cut these trees down. A bamboo stand at the foot of the village below the entrance is also a dwelling place of the **mier ringa**.

The guardian spirit of the village is associated with themes of life, generative potential, and continuity (ibid:105-107). The **mier ringa** is associated with the earth. The earth is conceived to be the source of life, fertility, and wealth in a number of respects. It is said that a great treasure is hidden beneath the earth (ibid:105). The **mier ringa** is believed to protect this treasure in its snake form. When the snake opens its mouth the gold inside rises up in the form of a rainbow. On the other hand, the rainbow is also believed to rise at the source of a spring. Thus, the **mier ringa** is not only a source of wealth, but is also associated with the the notion of source in yet another sense: that of the source of water which is the source of life for both humanity and the crops that nourish humanity. The Kédangese believe that humanity originated from the top of a local mountain. The same origin is attributed to the spring, which originated from a golden pot on top of the mountain.

According to Barnes (1974:106), the Kédangese draw an equation between wealth (including gold), field produce, meat, and fluids of life; and all these elements are associated with snakes, spirit, and luminosity. The **mier ringa** snake may also be viewed as the guardian of the spring since the rainbow is one form which is taken by this spirit.

No snakes may be killed near the spring, which is an idea also encountered on Flores. The golden pot, the source of the spring, is thus the origin of the rainbow. Barnes likens gold to water and to fluid which emerges from things, particularly from the earth; and which crosses boundaries (ibid:61). In this view, then, the **mier ringa** is also associated with points of transition.

The Kédang further subscribe to the idea of spirit-human marriage. If a woman washes her hair in the spring she will become insane, since the spirit of the spring marries her. Barnes interprets this concept as a confusion of categories; and an impairment of the source of life, the spring, accounts for the misfortune of the woman.

Rain and fertility of the fields are also connected with the **mier ringa** spirit, which also inhabits the field altars. Annual ceremonies are held at the spring to ensure an orderly progression of the seasonal cycle, the timely beginning of the rains, and the correct amount of rainfall (ibid:136). This ceremony involves the cleaning of the spring, which is the source of life and continuity. The purpose of the ceremony is to call the winds that bring the clouds and rain, and at the same time to clean the village of illness and impurities. In this way, the **mier ringa** are also connected with the cyclical affairs of life.

We see then that like the **nitu**, the **mier ringa** is associated with the earth, water, rain, rainbow, wealth, points of transition, fecundity of the fields, and with generative power in general. The physical form of this spirit is either a snake or a human, as indeed is that of **nitu**.. Its guardian role concerning the village and fields is also rather similar to the **ngebu** spirits of the Ngadha of Flores, which as noted are categorized as a type of **nitu**. The **mier ringa** appear to be essentially benevolent and the sources of life and continued existence of humanity. Their association with the physical materials of well-being (fields, rain, springs, earth, etc.), with generative potential; and with the role of guardianship is in line with similar notions held about **nitu** as sources of life, order, and continuity. In a comparable manner to **nitu**, the role of the **mier ringa** in bringing about discontinuity only manifests itself when cosmic order is breached and categories are

confused (i.e. human-spirit marriage), thus impairing the source of life and continuity. Therefore, this Kédangese category of spirits appears to be both structurally and representationally very similar to the spirit category **nitu** .

Sumba (CMP speakers).

As noted earlier, the term **nìtu** is present on Sumba; but it refers to the sandalwood tree, and is not connected with **nitu** spirits (Onvlee 1984:320, S.V. **nìtu**). Nevertheless, among the Rindi of Sumba there are conceptual associations of spirits of the dead and certain earth spirits which appear to be similar in a number of ways to the the conception of **nitu** elsewhere in eastern Indonesia.

The Rindi spirits of the dead are conceived to be the source of life (Forth 1981:202). The dead are in many respects symbolically feminine, and are associated with the earth in its nurturing aspects. Furthermore, the dead are linked with the interior of the island, which is called the Head of the Earth, the region that is the source of major rivers (ibid:68,111), where the abode of the dead is believed to be located (ibid:93). Thus in this case too 'head' again is associated with 'source'. As was earlier pointed out, the anatomical head in Indonesian context tends to be conceived as a source of life, and of generative potential. The deceased are further connected with the earth, rain, water, and with the notion of fecundity of the fields and of humans:

> All life-giving essence derives from the dead, and so is the means by which the dead are returned to the living. In part this essence is identified with the deceased's body fluids which directly enter the earth. A complementary idea is that the vital essence derives from upstream, the direction of the land of the dead, in the form of rain and river water. By way of water it then enters crops and from there the bodies of men and women whose intercourse produces the living replacements of the dead (Forth 1981:202).

Thus the dead, or spirits of the deceased, are the recurrent sources of life and continuity. They are the source of life for the crops which nourish humanity. The deceased

are also the ultimate means of continuity of the social group, since only through their life-giving essence is the group propagated. The dead are moreover the sources of the ancestor population, since the dead are said eventually to become **marapu**, ancestors (ibid:93). It should be noted, however, that the east Sumbanese strongly distinguish the dead from the earliest ancestors, the **marapu**, a contrast that does not appear to be found in so marked a form elsewhere in eastern Indonesia. The dead, as opposed to the ancestors, are more immediate sources of life for their descendants, in the sense that they are more immediate and nurturing; whereas the ancestors are more distant and governing, guiding but also punishing their descendants (ibid:88-89). The conception of the deceased spirits among the Rindi thus appears to be very similar structurally to the **nitu**, the spirits of the dead, in regard to their nurturing qualities and in their role as sources of generative potential, life, and continuity. As regards the way they are represented, however, the Rindi dead appear to be quite different from the **nitu**, for they do not manifest themselves physically, as do the **nitu**; that is, in contrast to what is found in most other parts of Indonesia, they do not appear before the living in a visible, including human, guise (Forth 1981:131).

There also exists among the Rindi a belief in benevolent earth spirits that are also associated with fertility conferring powers and the potentiality of life. The idea of the "earth as the source (**pingi**) of all life" (ibid:104) is implicit in the attributes of these earth spirits. These spirits, particularly the **maràmba tana**, 'lords of the earth', seem in this respect to be very similar to **nitu**, the nature spirits. There is, however, a distinction to be noted between earth spirits that reside in uninhabited places and those spirits associated with stone altars found in inhabited areas, such as in the village and agricultural fields, even though both kinds may be designated by the term **maràmba tana** (Forth 1981:105,118).

The earth spirits of the uninhabited areas are said to live in the earth, residing in large trees of the genus Ficus with aerial root systems that grow atop or near stone outcrops and crevices (ibid:106). The 'earth lords', **maràmba tana**, are moreover described as light complexioned, beautiful, finely-dressed, and often small. They can appear both as

humans and as large decoratively patterned snakes. The **nitu**, particularly on Flores, it will be recalled, are also associated with the earth, stones, and large trees, particularly the banyan tree which is also a Ficus species and thus has aerial roots. The **maràmba tana**, the 'earth lords', in their finery closely resemble the representation of **nitu** among the Ngadha of Flores, while their small appearance is reminiscent of the **nitu** on Solor and Adonara. That these spirits assume the form of snakes of course also agrees with representations of **nitu**.

The 'earth lords' associated with areas outside of habitations are potentially benevolent, as they have the power to confer protection on those humans they favor -- including invulnerability to accident, injury, witch attack -- and to confer power that secures success in various human undertakings (ibid:106-107).

The altar spirits, on the other hand, reside in various stone altars within the village and in fields which are the object of organized rites. These altars, however, bear a resemblance to the natural abode of the 'earth lords', as they are comprised of a pile of stones and a tree or stake that shades them (ibid:118). The altar spirits are represented as a unitary entity comprising a male and female spirit, the 'lord' and 'lady'. The **maràmba tana** associated with the various stone altars of the Rindi have a "special and immediate relevance to human well-being" (ibid:120). These altars furthermore are linked with the clan shrines (**pahomba**), and are prominently associated with sources of life. The yard altar in particular is associated with generative power, and the spirits of the altar are invoked during all life cycle ceremonies (ibid:120). Besides securing prolificity and continuity, rites at the stone altars also secure protection -- protection from disease and other harmful forces. Another purpose of the rites performed at the village altars is to expel impurities from the village, which are associated with transgressions (ibid:120-122).

The stone altars and the spirits residing therein are also associated with points of transition. More specifically, the spirits of the yard altar, gate altars, and of the two altars located at the river estuary and at the upstream boundary of the domain prevent disease,

pestilence, witches, and other harmful forces from entering the village and its houses (Forth 1981:120). These spirits are thus associated with important boundaries between inside and outside. As shown, the **nitu**, as nature spirits, also tend often to be connected with points of transition; and to function as maintainers of boundaries that divide the human and spirit realms. Similarly, in Rindi, "... the spirits of the altars ... also preserve boundaries that separate the inside from the outside and thus lend protection against harmful, extraneous forces" (Forth 1981:129).

In Rindi the benevolent earth spirits, including the altar spirits, therefore appear to be very similar to the **nitu**, both in the way they are represented and in their various conceptual associations. In this connection, however, it should be noted that in contrast to the 'earth lords' associated with the outside and natural realm, the altar spirits have no physical representation. In this respect, then, the altar spirits differ from **nitu**. On the other hand, their connection with the earth, points of transition, fertility, and life-conferring qualities in particular are reminiscent of **nitu**. In certain respects, moreover, the Sumbanese earth spirits in general, like **nitu**, can be regarded as sources of generative potential which provide for the continuity of the human community.

Timor (CMP speakers).

The conception of the spirits of the deceased found among the Mambai of eastern Timor also appears to be similar to the conception of **nitu** as collective ancestral spirits, particularly in the eastern Indonesian context. The dead are connected with a complex of ideas which ultimately concerns the source of life and continuity of society.

In Mambai, the 'shades' of the deceased promote human life (Traube 1987:186). The ritual system of the Mambai involves two sets of ritual actions -- black rituals and white rituals. The living and the dead are linked in a reciprocal relationship which spans these two sets of rituals (ibid:185). In the former, the living dedicate costly sacrifices to the dead, which the deceased return in the white ritual in the form of luck, prosperity, and fertility.

The shades of the dead are the ultimate source of generative power which provides for the continuity of the cycle of life and for the preservation of order in the cosmos. In this context they are similar to the nitu, the spirits of the deceased.

Among the Mambai, the dead are thought to dwell in the sea; and interact with and join the living through sacred springs which connect the sea with land and, furthermore, the upperworld and lowerworld of Mambai cosmology (ibid:187). In a similar manner, the spring functions as a connecting entity between the world of the dead and the living in the context of conceptions of nitu associated with the spirits of the deceased elsewhere in Indonesia. However, in Mambai, contact between the living and the dead can take place only in the framework of the proper rituals. In this connection we should note a similarity to the afore-mentioned Rindi of Sumba, where 'altar spirits' are the object of organized rites whereas contact with the 'earth lord' is a purely individual matter (Forth 1981:105). Among the Mambai, contact outside the proper framework precipitates discontinuity; that is, illness, death, pestilence, and other misfortunes. In a similar manner to nitu, the deceased, then, are associated with points of transition and with the maintenance of the boundary between the two realms. The breach of the boundary results in discontinuity, which again is reminiscent of ideas associated with nitu.

The spring among the Mambai also has transformative and life-giving qualities (ibid:188). Thus the association of the spring with the deceased is in accordance with their role as sources of life and prolificity. The sacred springs are also the subject of annual rites. When the 'shades' return to the spring, they are believed to confer their blessing on the living, which brings prosperity in the form of abundance in buffalo, goats, breast disks, money, pigs, and cloths, which are the traditional items of wealth and serve as prestations exchanged between affinally-linked groups. Thus, like nitu, the 'shades' are connected with the complex which includes the elements of items of wealth and the spring.

The blessing of the ancestors on this occasion is also viewed as a counter-gift for the livestock that their wife-givers sacrificed at their mortuary ritual. Thus, according to

Traube (1987:193), the transaction at the spring is symbolically dependent upon marital exchange relations. The shades of the dead confer their life-generating power on the living, a power which enables the crops to thrive, which not only sustains the living but also secures wealth. The wealth then allows more marriages to be contracted, which in turn provides for the social and biological continuity of the group.

Rain is also associated with the spirits of the deceased among the Mambai. Rain is conceived to be the rising breath of the deceased which is transformed and returned as rain (ibid:194). In this form the essence of the deceased, enters the plants. The 'shades' are thus embodied in the cultivated plants, which are believed to stimulate desire. The essence of an 'ancestral shade' is transmitted to women through sexual intercourse, and "the child that is born will have a "face like an ancestor" " (ibid:195). Thus in the cycle of life the ancestors return to the living, which is reminiscent of the Rindi (Sumba) conceptions concerning rain and the spirits of the deceased.The connection of rain with fluids of life is very similar to some of the notions already mentioned, according to which rain is thought of as the life fluids of the **nitu**, notions which are found on Flores, Solor, and Adonara.

The Mambai spirits of the deceased are, therefore, the ultimate source of life, continuity, and of the maintenance of cosmic order. They provide for prolificity but punish with discontinuity if the cosmic order is breached. In these respects, then, the Mambai spirits of the deceased appear to be very similar to conceptions of **nitu** as found elsewhere in eastern Indonesia.

Sulawesi (WMP speakers).

The Sa'dan Toraja of Sulawesi associate notions of life and continuity, which are similar to those associated with **nitu**, with the spirits, **deata**, and with the **matua** or **nene**, the ancestors (Nooy-Palm 1979; Waterson 1984; Volkman 1985). The Toraja ritual system is organized into two categories : the Rites of the East and the Rites of the West. The former is primarily associated with life, prosperity, and growth. The east is connected with the **deata**. The **deata** are spirits that have been in existence since the beginning of time; and

also include the transformed, deified ancestors. Thus this category comprises both free spirits and ancestors. Some of the **deata** are named and have definite characteristics, while others are associated with particular houses, snakes, springs, rocks, and trees. These associations are particularly reminiscent of those of **nitu**. The **deata** are said to influence events on earth, and everyday life, since they are dispersed all over the world. The **deata**, along with the ancestors (who are primarily associated with the west and south), and Puang Matua (the creator of humanity who dwells in the upperworld and is associated with the direction of north) are provided with offerings in various rituals. Through these rituals, order in the universe is maintained (Volkman 1985:35). At the same time, the association of the **deata** with the east indicates them to be the source of life, prosperity, and continuity.

The ancestors, **nene** or **to matua**, are the spirits of the deceased (**bombo**) who inhabit Puya, the land of the dead in the south. The ancestors are believed to have the power to bless or harm the living. They are in a sense a source of both continuity and discontinuity. The realm of the living and the dead are interconnected. If the living perform the proper ritual, some of the **bombo** (dead) may eventually become **deata**; and thus a source of generative power which is conferred on their descendants. At any ritual the **nene** (ancestors) must be given offerings -- an act called 'feeding the ancestors'-- in order to secure their blessing. A connection is also maintained with the ancestors through the practice of naming grandchildren after them. The ancestors' blessing is required for health, wealth, livestock (particularly buffalo), and for the rice fields. This quality of the ancestors manifests itself especially in the **ma nene** ritual. This ritual separates the ritual cycles of death and regeneration; and takes place after the dead have been buried, and before planting begins. The ancestors are also believed to attend the important task of ploughing and the harvest. Therefore, like the **nitu**, the Toraja spirits of the deceased are connected with the cyclical affairs of life.

The ancestors are thought to return to the earth in the form of rain, causing the crops to flourish; and thereby to nurture their descendants. Volkman (1985:35) also mentions that humans meet their ancestors at the spring. Thus the spring is again associated with the ancestral spirits, and it is a point of transition between the realms of the living and the dead. This particular association of the ancestors with the spring, then, appears to be very similar to certain eastern Indonesian ideas about **nitu**. The fertilizing or generative power associated with the south side of the house (Volkman 1985:47) would also indicate such power being connected with the ancestors, who reside in the south.

However, ancestors among the Toraja also punish if the proper customs are not followed. Transgressions include neglecting to provide proper mortuary rites, not 'feeding' them, and not tending the bones in the graves properly. Thus, if the customs are not followed, the ancestors withdraw their blessing; that is, their life-generating and protecting powers.

The ancestors (**nene**) in their associations with rain, springs, cultivation, and generative potential in general can be regarded as sources of life, prosperity and continuity for their descendants, a notion which is quite similar to the conception of **nitu** as collective ancestral spirits. The ancestors may also become **deata** who are explicitly linked with notions of life, growth, and, in particular, prosperity. The association of **deata** with trees, rocks, snakes, and springs also recalls the **nitu** as nature spirits. The life-giving and transformative and transitional qualities of the spring are particularly relevant in this context. The ancestors are also a source of discontinuity if the customary rules and norms, particularly those associated with mortuary rites and offerings, are breached. It can therefore be concluded that the **deata** and the ancestors together form the source, and provide continuity for humanity in a similar manner to the **nitu**.

Madagascar (WMP speakers)

The Merina of Madagascar are an Austronesian-speaking population (Bloch 1989:633-646). They also appear to possess certain notions concerning continuity and sources of life which resemble those relating to the **nitu** as ancestral spirits.

The Merina associate the concept of continuity of the descent group and of life itself with the blessing and life-giving potential of the ancestors. The ancestors, that is the previous generations, are the source of life for the new generation. The ancestral rice lands are particularly significant in this respect. The rice fields are the inherited wealth of the descendants; thus rice is the product of the land of the ancestors. Into this land (earth) the ancestors are placed at death. In this way, the ancestors are conceived of as the source of life for the crops that nourish their descendants, thus securing the continuity of the descent group. It is through the ancestors' life-giving essence that the crops thrive. Thus, the consumption of rice can be equated with the 'eating of the ancestors' in Bloch's phrase (ibid). Rice is conceived as the stuff of life, a source of life. A significant mythological notion found among the Merina involves the concept of eating the body of the ancestor; an act which transfers the blessing which will give life to future generations. Therefore, the living and dead of a descent group and the ancestral lands, especially rice fields, form a single unity. This unity is essentially linked with the concept of continuity of the descent group (ibid:633-35). Therefore, the ancestors are the ultimate source of life, generative potential, and of biological and social continuity in a way that recalls the conception of **nitu** as ancestral spirits in Indonesia.

Among the Merina, descendants receive the 'blessing' or generative potential in yet another way. Bloch (ibid:640) mentions the ritual of 'blowing on of water' which transfers the life potential from ancestors to the new generation. This water is associated with the ancestors by virtue of the fact that it has been previously placed in the tomb. The water is blown from the mouth of an elder onto the younger generation, so that the group may reproduce itself. The Merina also associate water with power, strength, energy, vitality for

growth and the wild. These qualities are moreover connected with the water spirits, **vazimba**, who, according to myth, were matrilineal, autochthonous beings conquered by the ancestors (ibid:640). It is said that the power of **vazimba** was acquired and made 'safe' by the ancestors. Thus, the vitality and life-giving power of the **vazimba** water, which is first ritually transformed, is retained and transferred within the descent group, thereby ensuring its continuity.

The association of the Merina ancestors with earth, water, crops, and in a sense cyclicality, and the primary association with the generative potential for life is very similar to the conception of **nitu** as ancestral spirits. The connection of the **vazimba**, water spirits, with life-conferring, and thus feminine, qualities is also very reminiscent of the **nitu** as nature spirits; and their association with water as the source of life, and well-being.

III

From the foregoing discussion it is evident that there are a number of similarities between the representation of certain spirits in mainland and insular Southeast Asia, and also on Madagascar, that are not called **nitu**, and the **nitu** of other parts of Austronesian-speaking Southeast Asia. The **phii** and **nat** spirits of non-Austronesian Thailand and Burma respectively are conceived in ways very similar to **nitu**, but structurally they are quite different. This difference, I suggested, is primarily a function of a different view of the cosmos, the universe being seen as tending towards chaos, and order being maintained and the beneficial potential of the spirit world being tapped only through constant human intervention, that is through cultural intervention.

The consideration of various nature and ancestral spirits not called **nitu** that are found among the Austronesian-speaking groups of Indonesia and Madagascar indicated a close resemblance to the conception of **nitu**. This resemblance is connected with the association

of these different spirit categories with the notions of source of life, biological and social continuity, and generative potential. These categories of spirits are not only structurally similar to the **nitu**, but also exhibit a strong resemblance in the ways they are represented; for example, in their associations with earth, water, rain, rainbow, snakes, and so on. These various classes of spirits in Indonesian societies also appeared to be associated with the concept of cosmic order. Like the **nitu**, they are a source of discontinuity if order is breached and categories are mixed. But chaos ensues only from cultural misdeeds, and order is present in the universe so long as norms and rules are heeded. Since the Austronesian spirit categories discussed in this chapter clearly resemble the **nitu**, not only in the way they are represented, but in the way people view the relationship between these spirits, themselves, nature, and order in the cosmos, I would suggest that among these groups the term **nitu**, previously in use, has probably been replaced by another term. The fact that **nitu** can refer either to ancestral spirits or nature spirits may have had an influence on this lexical replacement; that is, as a way of resolving the potential ambiguity. The Sumbanese, on the other hand, might have retained the term **nitu** only as the word for 'sandalwood tree', since, on the basis of similar connection between trees and **nitu** among other eastern Indonesian groups, here too it may have originally referred to nature spirits, while a new term may have replaced **nitu** in the meaning of ancestral spirits.

So far I have been considering the similar conceptual associations entailed in the category of **nitu** in the Austronesian-speaking world, and I have compared this category with other similar categories of spirits. In the following Chapter, I shall make a detailed examination of the concept of **nitu** among the Ngadha people of Flores. This separate treatment is warranted on the grounds that the Ngadha appear to make a unique use of this Austronesian term, namely as the designation of a single female earth deity. Furthermore, the Ngadha material is the most extensive for eastern Indonesia with respect

to the category of **nitu**. In Chapter Five I intend to show that among this people, **nitu**, as the Earth Mother, is an aspect of the Ngadha conception of divinity; and also that the category has implications for the connected notions of 'source', 'origin', and 'continuity. In Chapter Six, I will follow up this analysis with a discussion of the implications of the conception of divinity found among the Ngadha in the context of authority and political relations, particularly as these pertain to the concept of **nitu**.

CHAPTER FIVE: NITU, AN ASPECT OF THE DUAL CONCEPTION OF DIVINITY AMONG THE NGADHA OF FLORES

In this chapter I shall examine the Ngadha concept of **nitu**. The Ngadha reside in central Flores (Arndt 1930-1960). Their western and eastern neighbours are the Manggarai and the Nagé respectively. The location of the Ngadha on Flores is illustrated in Map 5 in Chapter Two. The Ngadha inhabit a rather mountainous area including the Inerie volcano (Rokka in some Dutch writings), which plays a prominent role in mythology. They are primarily cultivators and livestock raisers. Their religion revolves around the ancestors and **Nitu** and **Déva**, the Earth Mother and the Creator.

Although I have briefly dealt with this topic in previous chapters in connection with similar ideas held about this Austronesian term, I believe the Ngadha case demands further consideration. In this region of central Flores there is an apparently unique association of the concept of **nitu** with a feminine earth deity, **Nitu**. As I pointed out in Chapter Two, the Ngadha appear to be unique with respect to social organization as well, within the Florinese context. In contrast to the patrilineal descent systems and asymmetric marriage alliance found among most groups of Flores, the Ngadha possess no form of marriage alliance and have an ambilineal system of descent.

Arndt, who was a missionary among the Ngadha and who has written several ethnographic descriptions of Ngadha and of other groups of Flores, Solor, Adonara, and Sumbawa, distinguishes between the earth spirits, spirits of the deceased, and the feminine Earth Mother by using small 'n' in the term **nitu** to designate the former two, and a capital 'N', thus **Nitu**, to designate the Earth Mother. Here, **Nitu** is opposed to the masculine Creator god **Déva**. It should be noted that the term **Déva** ultimately derives from the Sanskrit **deva-**, which means 'god' (Gonda 1973:47, 151, 275, 283, 301, 446).[1]

Since Arndt's data are my primary source for the following discussion and analysis, I should raise several issues which might cast doubt on Arndt's interpretations and

descriptions before I proceed any further with the discussion of **Nitu Déva** as the concept of Ngadha divinity. The first question concerns the extent to which Arndt's interpretation of **Nitu** as the female earth deity in contrast to **Déva** the masculine sky deity is correct. This concern partly derives from the fact that he identifies dual expressions for divinity among the Lionese and Nagé groups of Flores, **Duà Nggaè** and **Gaé Déva** respectively, with terms for unitary sky and earth deities (see Arndt 1933,1937; Stöhr 1976:218).

This identification has been demonstrated as being wrong by more recent studies carried out by anthropologists in these regions of Flores. More specifically, while the Lionese **Duà Nggaè** is a dual expression for the all-encompassing divinity, **Duà** is not considered male or masculine, nor is **Nggaè** thought to be female or feminine (Prior 1988:63-64). In fact, Prior's informants laughed outright at even the suggestion of such a gender specification, particularly the idea of a female deity (ibid). What is more, **Duà** in other contexts can mean 'old' or 'ancient', while **Nggaé** signifies 'honor' and 'glory' (ibid). In a similar vein, **Gaé** does not refer to a feminine earth deity among the Nagé, the eastern neighbours of the Ngadha. Instead **Gaé Déva** is a dual expression for the Creator, with the term **gaé** functioning mainly as an honorific, though it can also be understood as a reference to earth spirits (Forth 1989, pers. comm.)

Yet despite the fact that these newer studies cast some doubt on Arndt's previous claims, there is evidence, at least in the Ngadha case, that **Nitu** refers to a female earth deity, while **Déva** designates the masculine sky God, the Creator. In " Déva, das Höchste Wesen der Ngadha", Arndt (1936,1937) records accounts from several informants from the different areas of the Ngadha region of central Flores with respect to the concept of God. In these accounts, various informants clearly distinguish a masculine representation for **Déva**, the Creator of the world and humanity, and a feminine Earth Mother, **Nitu** (see, for example, re: **Nitu**, 1937:350-351, 355, 358, 360, 365, 367). Thus, one can argue that Arndt has merely extended his interpretation for the concept of divinity among the Ngadha to that of other groups of Flores. In this connection it should also be noted that as a missionary, he

spent many years living among the Ngadha, from 1929 up to his death in 1960 (with a brief interruption of the Second World War). Thus he came to know the Ngadha first hand, whereas, he probably learned about the other groups that he wrote on either from second hand information or from briefer visits to those regions.

Another objection one might raise with respect to Arndt's data regarding the Ngadha concept of divinity is the fact that, since the language does not distinguish between singular and plural, we cannot know for certain whether Arndt's informants were referring to the Creator and the Earth Mother in their descriptions, as opposed to the numerous lesser spirits that are called by the same terms as the divine pair; that is, **déva** and **nitu**. Again, I have to refer back to Arndt's (1936,1937) publications in order to attempt to clarify this concern. His informants distinguished the Creator, **Déva**, by using various qualifiers, such as 'the one who was not created', 'the one who has no father or mother', 'the one without beginning or end', 'the one who has been there since the beginning of time', and 'the one who lives above in the sky or heaven'. In contrast, however, when speaking of the spirit agents, the **déva**, these qualifiers were not used; and there was the general explanation that these déva are ' many in number', and that they inhabit the mountains and the houses. With respect to **Nitu**, when referring to the female earth deity, the informants generally qualified their statements with phrases such as 'Our Mother', 'Mother Earth', 'a great power who resides in the earth', in contrast to when they referred to the **nitu**, the spirits of the deceased and nature spirits. In fact, in a couple of instances, the informants specified when they were talking about the spirits of the dead.

Thus, with these considerations of Arndt's data in mind, I will attempt to demonstrate that there is indeed a dual conception of divinity associated with the term **nitu** in the Ngadha region of central Flores, an association which appears to be absent among other Austronesian speakers. As an aspect of divinity, **Nitu**, however, also has implications for the themes of 'source','origin', and 'continuity' discussed.

In the following discussion and analysis I will be using Dumont's (1970,1986) framework of hierarchical opposition rather than Needham's (1973) complementary opposition which has more often been applied to Indonesian materials. I should therefore briefly summarize these two approaches. A hierarchical relation is an encompassing of the contrary; that is, an opposition between a set and an element of this set (Dumont 1986:227). The differentiation of an opposing pair of elements, says Dumont, is not definable in itself but only in relation to the whole (ibid:228). In Dumont's argument, therefore, the opposing elements do not have a prior existence; that is, these elements exist only in relationship to each other. The relation of opposition to which Dumont is referring can be seen as a > b when a = a + b. Thus, the emphasis in this argument is on the encompassing of one element by another, its contrary, which is in consequence the subordinate member of the pair.

In contrast, in the context of complementary opposition as advocated by Needham, the opposing pair of elements together form the whole; and exist prior to and independently of their relationship. Thus, according to Needham's analysis, the binary classification of the more or less homologous oppositions, that is, a polarity or complementarity, essentially constitutes the symbolic system. His argument, therefore, focuses on the analogy between two or more binary oppositions, which may be represented by the formula a : b :: c : d, and so on.

I

The Ngadha of central Flores believe in a feminine earth deity, **Nitu**. She is conceived as the Earth Mother or Earth Goddess, the Great **Nitu**. One of Arndt's more philosophically inclined informants suggested that originally **nitu** simply meant the earth (1930:825; 1956:422); but, as I remarked earlier, this statement was probably meant figuratively rather than literally. **Déva**, the Creator, supposedly made the first humans out of the earth,

and thus the earth became deified and regarded as the mother of humanity; whereas **Déva** was considered as the father of mankind. However, according to other informants, myths, and prayers of offering, **Nitu** is referred to as the powerful female spirit who guards the earth, and as the great woman or 'Our Mother' who lives beneath the earth or in a cave (Arndt 1930, 1931, 1936, 1937, 1956, 1960b). **Nitu** as the mother of humanity is venerated in conjunction with **Déva**, the Creator and father of mankind. In prayers they are addressed together as **Nitu Déva**. In these prayers **Nitu** always precedes **Déva**, but this pattern may well be only a convention of the language and need not indicate that **Nitu** is considered superior. The divine pair are also addressed as **ciné cema**[2], 'mother and father' (**ciné** = mother, **cema** = father [Arndt 1961:209,213]), or as **Nitu zalé, Déva zéta**, 'Nitu below, Déva above' (Arndt 1960b). Thus, **Nitu** and **Déva** are conceived to be the first parental pair, the divine, first ancestral mother and father (Arndt 1931:736).

Nitu is thought of as the nurturing mother. At death, the souls of the deceased are believed to go to **Nitu**, who provides her children with a home and land to work (Arndt 1937:350,355). The spirits of the deceased are called **nitu**, and they are said to lead lives parallel to those of humans. **Nitu** is also regarded as the source of fecundity for the crops. It is believed that in rain **Déva** and **Nitu** unite; that is to say **Déva** fertilizes **Nitu**. From this creative union the success of the crops and vegetation is secured. The rain is regarded as the milk of **Nitu** as well as the semen of **Déva** (Arndt 1930:341). It is the milk of **Nitu** which nourishes the crops that feed mankind. Therefore, rain comprises the life-giving body fluids of the divine pair. In case of drought, offerings are made to **Nitu** and **Déva** together (Arndt 1960b :247)[3].

In the context of the nurturing and maternal role of **Nitu**, it should be mentioned that she is also regarded as the supplier of game. It is said that before men go on the hunt, they must sacrifice to Mother **Nitu** (Arndt 1937:365). **Nitu** is the owner of the game. Thus, **Nitu** nourishes humanity in yet another way.

Nitu is also conceived to be the mistress of all other **nitu**, the earth spirits and the dead, who in a sense become earth spirits, or at least, are identified with the earth spirits. In a number of ways **Nitu** encapsulates the nature and characteristic features of these lesser spirits, especially concerning the notions of sources of life and continuity; but also as regards the associations with earth,water, rain, and snakes, among other things. **Nitu**, the Earth Mother, can be regarded as the origin or mother of humanity. In her maternal role, she is literally the source of life and continuity of her children. She is regarded as the source of crops and game which nourish the living, and thus she provide for their corporeal continuity. That **Nitu** is the source of the physical materials of well being is furthermore implicit in her association with earth, water, and rain. **Nitu** is, therefore, the nurturing mother; and she embodies the feminine, generative potential of the Ngadha cosmos.

However, **Nitu** cannot stand on her own as the ultimate source of continuity and order of the world. Her full significance cannot be understood without considering her in relation to **Déva**, the Creator. The significance of either **Nitu** or **Déva** is only realized and manifest in their relation to each other. In the rest of this chapter, therefore, I shall look at the duality of **Nitu Déva**, which appears to form a unity that can be considered as the Ngadha concept of divinity.

The dual mother-father or female-male roles of **Nitu** and **Déva** need further elaboration. I have already mentioned the divine pair's postulated role in the creation of mankind, as well as their association with rain, body fluids, and the fecundity of the earth in connection with crops. I also pointed out that in some cases the spirits of the deceased are thought to go to **Nitu**, where they lead much the same kind of life as they did on earth. Yet, some of the deceased, namely those who died a violent or accidental death, are believed to go to **Déva** in the sky, in contrast to those who died a natural death, who go beneath the earth. In the domain of **Déva** the spirits of the dead moreover do not have to work; all is provided for them by the Creator (Arndt 1930:836-838; 1937:195,197). This belief appears to be at variance with notions concerning 'bad' death found elsewhere in Indonesia, where the

spirits of those who died a bad death are doomed to a homeless, wandering state. They are also generally malevolent and vindictive towards the living (see Fox 1973; Körner 1936; Perry 1915). In the Ngadha case, however, 'bad' death does not appear to have the same consequences, since those who died a bad death are not associated with the malevolent spirits of the outside, but instead with the Creator, **Déva**, who, as will be shown later, is the most encompassing form of divinity. In connection with the spirits of the dead, **Déva** moreover appears to encompass the nurturing quality of **Nitu**.

The dual role of **Nitu** and **Déva** in death is further demonstrated in a pair of parallel phrases. Thus, at death it is said that **Déva :ena, Nitu ni:u**, which Arndt (1930:824) translates as '**Déva** called him, **Nitu** got a hold of him'. **:Ena** means to summon, while **ni:u** or **nicu** means 'to invite', 'to name', 'to call' (Arndt 1961:209,358).

In certain respects, **Nitu** the nurturing mother is opposed to the masculine, regulatory father, **Déva**. **Déva** is considered to be the all-powerful Creator (Arndt 1936,1937). In order to demonstrate the full extent of the duality of **Nitu Déva, Déva** should be considered on his own.

Déva is described as a stately old man with a long beard and a golden dagger or staff. He is said to be dressed in all manner of finery. His appearance hints at the wisdom of an elder; and his authority is further indicated by the dagger or staff, which I would interpret as symbols of authority. The dagger or staff could also be interpreted as phallic symbols, which would not be inconsistent with **Déva**'s representation as the father of humanity as well as the father of the various spirits of Ngadha cosmology -- **déva, noca, nitu, vera-polo**. These spirits are thought to be his servants (Arndt 1930, 1931,1936,1937). **Déva**'s will is carried out by these subordinate spirits. Without his permission, the spirits do not have the authority to punish mankind for various transgressions against cultural norms and rules. **Déva** is thought to dwell in the sky. Therefore, **Déva** may be regarded as the remote and governing masculine deity. He is remote both in the sense that he punishes through subordinate, intermediary spirits; and in that he is associated with the sky. In this sense,

he contrasts with the more immediate and nurturing, feminine deity, **Nitu**, who is close to the earth.

The nurturing mother and governing father appear to form a unity, a dual conception of divinity, that provides for the biological and cultural continuity of humanity. This dual conception of divinity is further manifested in the various associations of **Déva** and **Nitu**. As noted, **Déva** is generally associated with the sky and the above. In contrast, **Nitu** is connected with the earth, water, and below. **Déva** is thought to travel on the clouds; or manifest himself in the form of such birds as falcons or eagles.[4] In contrast, **Nitu** is associated with the more earth-bound animals, especially with snakes. As noted, the Creator is represented as a man holding a golden staff or dagger. The subordinates of **Nitu** -- i.e. **nitu**, the earth spirits -- are associated with the art of weaving (Arndt,1937:365,368). The **nitu** are said to weave multi-colored cloth, and in so far as **Nitu** encompasses all other features of the lesser **nitu**, it may be said that she herself is associated with weaving. Daggers (swords) -- or at least metal items -- and textiles tend to be used as bridewealth payments and counter-prestation items respectively throughout Indonesia (van Wouden 1968). Although, owing to limitations of space and to the large amount of relevant data, I cannot fully discuss the significance of swords and textile in Ngadha society, it may be mentioned that these items play a role in various ceremonial undertakings that have implications of generative potentiality and of continuity in Ngadha. For example, war victims are bundled in women's clothes in order to facilitate healing (Arndt 1954:409). Also, ancestral swords and daggers play an important role in agricultural rites in the context of conducting fertility to the fields (Arndt 1954). A fuller discussion of the role of swords and textiles and the generative potential associated with these items merits separate treatment, and would be a topic in its on right.

The opposition of the nurturing mother and the governing father, **Nitu** and **Déva**, may be summarized as in Figure 3.

Déva	Nitu
masculine	feminine
sky / clouds	earth / water
above	below
birds / sky-animals	snake / earth-animals
staff / dagger	weaving
governing	nurturing

Figure 3. The Complementarity of Déva and Nitu.

From the figure it can be seen how concepts of **Déva** and **Nitu** form a divine unity which is expressed in complementary dualism. However, **Déva** and **Nitu** should not be regarded simply as two halves that compose the totality of divinity. In certain respects, **Déva encompasses Nitu.** He is the Creator, and everything has its origin in him. He created the earth, and as was pointed out earlier **Nitu** is identified with the earth. **Déva** is also the originator of all lesser spirits, including the lesser **nitu**, who appear to be under the jurisdiction of **Nitu. Furthermore, nitu** and all the other spirits may not act on their own, but can only do so with the Creator's permission. I mentioned above that **Déva** encompasses the nurturing quality of **Nitu. Therefore, Déva** appears to be the ultimate expression of the concept of divinity. He stands both for himself and **Nitu**, so that the Ngadha concept of divinity may be represented as in Figure 4.

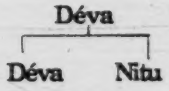


Figure 4. The Ngadha concept of divinity.

All that the concept of divinity entails for the Ngadha can only be fully understood, however, when the diverse groups of spirits in the Ngadha pantheon are examined in relation to the general conception of divinity. As indicated, the subordinate intermediary spirit agents of **Déva**, and their characteristics, seem to be encompassed by the dual concept

of divinity. Therefore, the nature of these spirits and their relationship to **Déva** and **Nitu** should be examined.

As pointed out earlier, the **nitu**, as earth spirits and the spirits of the deceased, are identified in Ngadha thought. More particularly, the spirits of the dead are thought to become earth spirits. Thus, both are associated with the earth, water, rain, and concepts of fertility and generative potential in general. Through these associations, and by their nurturing character, the **nitu** in many respects may be identified with **Nitu**, the Earth Mother. It seems to me indeed that **Nitu** embodies all the characteristic features of the nature spirits and the collective ancestral spirits. She appears to be the major expression of generative potential, sources of life, and continuity. She stands both for herself and for the collective ancestral spirits and the nature spirits. Thus, the unity manifest in **Nitu** may be illustrated as in Figure 5:

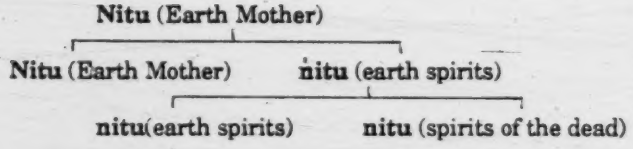


Figure 5. **Nitu**, a unifying principle of generative potential

In order to gain a full picture of the concept of divinity, we should look at the place of the other spirit servants of **Déva** in the framework of the Ngadha expression of divinity.
As noted, the **déva** are conceived to be a group of spirits that comprise the primary agents of the Creator, **Déva**. Again, Arndt distinguishes between the Creator and his servants by the use of a capital 'D' and a small 'd' respectively.

On earth, the **déva** are said to live on top of the mountains or inside the houses of humans (Arndt 1930:818-819). The latter type of **déva** is called **déva saõ**. As **saõ** means house (Arndt 1961:485), the **déva saõ** is 'the **déva** of the house'. The **déva** are entrusted with

the monitoring of all human activity, good or bad. Especially the **déva saö** and the personal guardian **déva**, that is, the guardian spirit an individual, are charged with this task. They must report all human transgressions to **Déva**, and according to His instructions and permission they punish of the offending individual. These punishments include sudden death, drought, capturing the human soul and slaughtering it in the transformed state of a water buffalo,[5] and the inflicting of various illnesses (Arndt 1936,1937). Thus, the **déva** are the maintainers of order, and so have a regulatory function as befits their role as agents of **Déva**.

The **déva** can assume the form of clouds, falcons, eagles, and crows (Arndt 1930: 711,841); and thus are associated with the above, as is the masculine Creator himself. They can also assume the form of a horse or a water buffalo when they set out to punish humans for their transgressions, though they own such livestock as well. They are thought to lead their lives like humans do, work their fields, and to possess a soul. They are also believed to have wives and to celebrate feasts.

On the basis of the representation of the Creator and the **déva** spirits, the **déva** may be said to be masculine. The association of mountains, clouds, birds, and thus the sky and the above with these spirits is virtually identical to that of the masculine Creator, **Déva**. The ownership and slaughter of livestock is generally associated with males in Indonesia, and therefore it also confirms the masculinity of **déva**.

The Ngadha regard the human soul as the **kerbau**, water buffalo, of the **déva**. Thus, when the **déva** slaughter a buffalo at their feasts, a human is thought to die on earth (Arndt,1930:818; 1937:354). This process, however, is also believed to work in reverse, so that when humans sacrifice a buffalo at their feasts, a **déva** is thought to die (Arndt 1930:820; 1937:362). As I mentioned above, the **déva** are thought to have souls, so that the souls of **déva** are possibly regarded as the water buffalo of mankind.

Just above I pointed out that the slaughtering of a human soul occurs as punishment for a transgression, and that the ultimate originator of this punitive action is the Creator.

Therefore, the slaughter of the human soul may be regarded as a means by which the Creator's agents, the **déva**, restore the order that was violated. In connection with the notion that the buffalo slaughtered by humans are the souls of the **déva**, on the other hand, the blood of the sacrificial animal should be understood as something that is conducive to fertility, for it is in the form of the sacrificial blood of the buffalo that fertility and generative power are returned to the earth (see Forth in press:15). Since the **déva** can be regarded as an aspect of **Déva**, the Creator, one may surmise that the blood of the water buffalo is equated with the essence of **déva**, and thus with **Déva**'s fertilizing potential, his semen. Hence, the sacrifice of a buffalo might be regarded as a recreation of the primeval union between **Déva**, the Creator, and **Nitu**, the Earth Mother.

Another spirit agent of the Creator is the class of spirits called **noca**. The **noca** are conceived to be a type of **déva** (Arndt 1936:900; 1937:195). This categorization of the **noca** may thus be represented as in Figure 6.

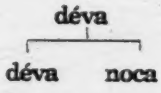


Figure 6. The place of the **noca** in the Ngadha spirit realm

The **noca** are believed to inflict epidemics on livestock and illness on humans as punishments for various human misdeeds. Epidemics and illness are inflicted suddenly. The **noca** are said to use invisible hammers and clubs to carry out the will of **Déva** (Arndt 1936:906-908). Before the **noca** kill, they must report to the **Déva** the offenses of men; and must obtain his permission to inflict disease. The **noca** are sometimes represented as the warriors of the Creator, possessing iron implements. These implements comprise hammers and clubs, which are reminiscent of **Déva**'s staff or dagger; and thus might be regarded as the symbols of the regulatory function of the **noca**.

As cloud demons, "Wolkendämon" (Arndt 1961:361), the **noca** also assume the appearance of dark clouds and black crows. Like the **déva**, the **noca** are primarily masculine in character. Not only their various attributes, for example, being associated with the above, the sky, and clouds, suggest the masculinity of the **noca**; but so does the fact that they are represented as a branch of the **déva**, a category the masculine character of which has already been established.

In the light of the foregoing information on **déva** and **noca**, we may conclude that these two categories of lesser spirits are aspects or manifestaticns of **Déva**, the Creator. More specifically, **Déva** can be regarded as the encompassing, largely inactive entity, with **déva** and **noca** being his active, order-enforcing aspects. Thus, **Déva** is the unifying principle of order, the ultimate law enforcer. Figure 7 summarizes this argument:

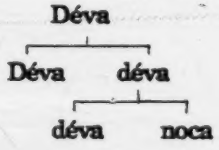


Figure 7. **Déva**, the unifying principle of order.

There remains only one more category of Ngadha spirits to be considered in this framework, the **polo** or **vera-polo**[6]. Although **polo**, 'witch', generally refers to humans who are possessed and controlled by a **vera** spirit and are thus believed to be witches, Arndt (1931:723; 1956:438) talks of the **vera-polo** in two instances as free spirits. Arndt's ethnographic descriptions do not establish the distinction between **polo** and **vera-polo** clearly enough. Nevertheless, as I shall demonstrate below, the latter is an important category in relation to **Déva**, the Creator, as well as to the category **déva**.

The **vera-polo** are conceived as malevolent spirits originating from the mountains (Arndt 1931:723; 1956:438). They are believed to cause various human illnesses and

misfortunes, and to feed on humans' flesh (Arndt 1954:443-453). In fact, they are the most dreaded of spirits among the Ngadha. The **vera-polo** can assume the appearance of various wild animals, including wild pigs that destroy the cultivated fields. Most of the Ngadha prayers end by a request to the divinity or ancestral spirits to drive away the **polo**.

When the **polo** threaten the inhabitants of a household, the **déva saŏ**, the guardian spirit of the house, is said to report to **Déva**, the Creator. If a person has violated certain norms or rules, the house spirit will be instructed to hand over the transgressor to the **vera-polo**. However, if no offense has been commited, the **déva saŏ** must protect him (Arndt 1936:896). The same protocol is in effect when an individual's pre-determined life time is up. With the permission of **Déva**, the **polo** is sent to eat the body (Arndt 1937:202). In this connection the **polo** is also associated with the **nitu**, since after eating the corpse, the **polo** has to deliver the soul of the deceased to the **nitu** (Arndt 1956:439). Therefore, the **vera-polo** can be regarded as an agent of the Creator, and indeed the most negative aspect of divinity.

The **vera-polo** is believed to inflict various diseases suddenly by using invisible knives, clubs, short swords, or a lance, **xaro** (Arndt 1954:444). This particular manner of inflicting illness, and the implements used, rather resembles the method of affliction by **noca**. Thus, the **vera-polo** might be regarded as a type of **noca** in certain respects; and by extension, the **polo** may be considered as masculine. This nature of the **vera-polo** is not only implied by their similarity to the **noca**, but also by their association with the mountain; and thus, with the above. The implements of **polo** are also reminiscent of **Déva**'s staff or dagger. Furthermore, Arndt, in his ethnographic descriptions concerning **polo**, uses the German masculine pronoun "er", he, when referring to the **polo**.

Polo, however, also appear to be associated in some ways with the feminine. Although the **polo** may assume the form of a bird, thus a sky animal, they are also thought to appear as of rats, mice, snakes, and wild pigs. These animals are of course earth animals. Furthermore, as I mentioned previously, game animals, such as wild pigs, are identified with the **nitu**, as are the snakes. But while these associations imply a feminine character,

in view of the aggressive nature of **polo** (e.g. the **vera** takes possession of a human who then becomes a witch), their mode of inflicting illness, and in their function as a punitive agent of the Creator, **Déva**, I would interpret the **polo** to be symbolically masculine in nature.[7]

In the context of this argument, then, **polo** can be regarded as spiritual beings comparable to **noca**, and thus as a type of **déva**, hence an aspect of divinity. This classification can be illustrated as in Figure 8.

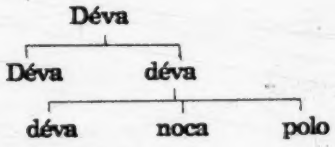


Figure 8. The category **Déva**, the masculine and governing aspect of divinity.

It is clear from the literature that the **déva** occupy a higher position than the **polo**. The **polo** may not inflict harm on mankind until the protective **déva** has secured **Déva**'s permission, so that a twofold permission is required. It is also implied that the **nitu** rank above the **polo**, since the **polo** has no right to the soul of the an individual. Hence there appears to be a hierarchy of authority in the spirit realm. The Ngadha conception of the spirit world thus entails a hierarchy of supernatural beings, with **Déva** possessing the highest authority. This hierarchy is summarized in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Hierarchy of authority in the Ngadha spirit realm.
(the arrows indicate a hierarchical relation and points to the superior party)

III

We are now in a position to elaborate further the notion of the dual conception of divinity among the Ngadha. The totality and unity of the Ngadha cosmos appears to find expression in the principle of divinity, **Déva** or **Nitu Déva**. **Nitu** is the nurturing, feminine component associated with sources, the origin of life, and the principle of generation and thus continuity. She is the entity that encompasses the earth spirits, **nitu**, and the collective ancestral spirits. **Déva**, in contrast, is the governing, masculine aspect of divinity associated with punishment. He is the ultimate law-giver and enforcer. He encompasses the other masculine spirits who are his agents and who enforce order in the cosmos. In certain respects, **Nitu** may be regarded as the source of natural or biological continuity for humanity, whereas **Déva** is the source of cultural continuity. Yet as an all-encompassing entity, **Déva** is the source of biological continuity as well; and this is implicit also in his role as progenitor of the first human ancestors. Thus the Ngadha conception of divinity in its entirety can be represented as follows in Figure 10.

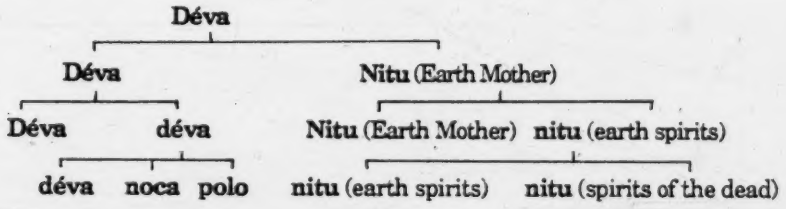


Figure 10. The Ngadha conception of divinity

In the foregoing analysis I have followed Dumont's (1970,1986) previously mentioned analytical framework of hierarchical opposition. I shall briefly reiterate that in an hierarchical relation the encompassing of the contrary is involved; that is the superior element encompasses its subordinate (Dumont 1986:227). From the foregoing discussion of the Ngadha cosmology it is evident that **Nitu** and **Déva** compose the dual and

complementary aspects of divinity. They form a unity which is an expression of the cosmos. Yet **Nitu** and **Déva** can not be regarded as two halves that simply compose the whole of divinity in combination. The full significance of both is manifest only in their relationship to each other, which is a part-whole relationship. **Déva** is the encompassing entity, the expression of the totality of divine power. He embodies the governing principle but also the generative, life-giving principle which is associated with **Nitu** as well. Therefore, he stands both for himself and for **Nitu**. He is the source of both biological and social continuity and order in the cosmos.

Considered on his own, **Déva** who embodies the nature of all his masculine spirit agents, is the remote and governing father. He is the ultimate judge who punishes those who transgress against cosmic order, which includes social order. Therefore, he is the primary source of social continuity. His role in regeneration and biological continuity moreover appears to be restricted to his function as progenitor.

Nitu, on her own, is the encompassing principle of generative, life-giving potential. She is the immediate, nurturing mother, the source of humanity. She embodies the nurturing principle that provides primarily for biological continuity. However, through the lesser **nitu**, she can also be associated with social continuity, since these spirits as well are believed to punish mankind if certain rules have been violated.

Related to the manifest nature of **Nitu** and **Déva**, and therefore to the concept of divinity, is the opposition between transcendence and immanence, which is considered by Muda (1986) in his study on the Ngadha conception of God. According to Muda, the transcendence of **Déva** is implicit in his remote and governing nature, in the fact that **Déva** after creating man and the world intervenes in the lives of his 'children' only indirectly, through his numerous spirit agents. In contrast, the immanence of **Déva** is expressed in **Nitu**, the Earth mother, who is more immediate, nurturing, and seemingly always present. Thus, according to Muda, **Nitu** is that aspect of **Déva** which is close by to his 'children', and tends to their immediate needs in order to ensure their survival.

Nitu and **Déva** compose the dual concept of divinity; but **Déva** is the ultimate expression of divinity, which also represents the cosmos and its order. **Nitu** and **Déva** are not definable in themselves, but only in relation to each other; and thus in relation to the concept of divinity and the cosmos.

In this chapter I have shown how the Ngadha concept of **nitu**, although in many respects similar to other Austronesian conceptions of this category, appears to differ from these in that it is also associated with the idea of an Earth Goddess, **Nitu** who apparently forms the immanent aspect of the dual conception of divinity. At the same time I have examined the symbolic order of the Ngadha cosmos, particularly in the context of the expression of divinity. The expression for divinity, **Nitu Déva**, among the Ngadha appears to be unique also in the context of other Florinese groups, where, generally, the expression for divinity does not include a feminine and a masculine component. Rather, among these other groups, the masculine Creator's name is complemented by an honorific, as for example in the Manggarai term for Creator, **Mori Keraeng**, where **mori** means 'lord'. As noted earlier, the Nagé and Lio terms for divinity, **Gaé Déwa** and **Duà Nggaè** respectively, can be understood in the same way. The **Nitu Déva** unity appears to be the expression of totality, not only in the context of the Ngadha symbolic order, but also in the context of social order. More specifically, there is a correspondence between the conception of divinity and of authority in the context of Ngadha social and political relations. This correspondence is the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: NITU, DÉVA, AND AUTHORITY IN NGADHA SOCIETY

The aim of this chapter is to examine the correspondence between religious ideology and the concept of dual authority in Ngadha society. Particular attention is given to the concordance between the concept of divinity, the subject of the previous chapter, and the expression of authority in social and political relations. The correspondence between the symbolic and social realms provides a test case for Needham's thesis (see King,1980) according to which a close concordance between the symbolic and social order exists only in societies which have unilineal descent and practise asymmetric alliance. King (1980) extends this thesis to cognatic societies. But since the Ngadha do not fit either Needham's or King's model, data from this society require a reformulation of the analytical frameworks that both Needham and King propose.

I

Van Wouden (1968:25-84,101-135) drew attention to the existence of a dual division of authority in the political organization of many Indonesian, and especially eastern Indonesian, societies. Since van Wouden's original work, several further studies have appeared that have explored the different configurations this type of dual authority takes in particular eastern Indonesian societies (see, for example, Barnes 1974:89-96; Clamagirand 1980:237; Francillon 1980:252-265; Forth 1981:235-264; Fox 1980b:109-110; Schulte Nordholt 1980:237; and Traube 1986:51-58, 101-102). Jural and military power is held by a particular leader(s) or a set of clans or lineages, while the ritual power and authority over land are possessed by another leader or set of clans or lineages. Frequently, this dual authority is symbolically expressed as an opposition between male and female, between sky and earth, between younger and elder, or between regulatory and nurturing functions. Each of the two leaders holds the ultimate authority with respect to either jural or

ritual roles. The two are thus represented as mutually exclusive, and form an opposing complementary pair.

The conception of dual authority can be found also among the Ngadha of Flores. I shall therefore consider the role of key authority figures in the political system in relation to the Ngadha religious system, and more specifically in relation to their conception of divinity.

II

The organization and characteristic features of the Ngadha spiritual realm appear to have parallels in the human world. More specifically, one can find similarities between the concept of **Nitu Déva** and key authority figures in society. The leaders of the clans, and of their various segments, of the villages, and of the village confederacies, thus appear to embody a number of features characteristic of the unity of **Nitu Déva**, so that the unity represented in the religious ideology also finds expression in the social order of Ngadha society. Before I proceed with these considerations, however, a brief summary of Ngadha social organization is required.

The Ngadha political system is organized on at least three levels. First there is the level of clan organization. The clan, **vocé**, is composed of several segments, **cili-bhou**, and subsegments, **sipo pali**. Thus, the Ngadha possess an elaborate system of exclusive, segmentary descent groups. They have an ambilineal system of descent. Clan membership can be acquired through either the female or male parent. The segmentary descent groups corporately own land holdings. They do not have any form of affinal alliance (Barnes 1980:110-112; Arndt 1954). As Barnes (1980:110) notes,

> Membership in a household, and consequently descent, residence and the inheritance of property and name, depends entirely upon whether the father has paid full bridewealth for his wife .

The symbolic unity and continuity of the clan and its branches is expressed in the clan or lineage house belonging to these various levels. Furthermore, continuity and unity are symbolized by the ritual posts, **ngadhu**; the upright stone offering pillar, **peco**; and by the

little ancestral mother house, **bhaga** of the **cili-bhou**. The **ngadhu** embodies and honors the founding clan fathers.

The second level of organization is the village. The village is composed of several different clans or clan segments. In the eastern region, in the Dzéré-Buu valley, and in Boba on the coast, those segments of the same clan that have settled in the same village form quarters, called **loca, bho,** or **boä,** within the village (Arndt 1954:215). The clan that founded the village has precedence, and its leader is the village leader (ibid:384-387).

Thirdly, the villages are united into village confederacies. The clan (or clans) that settled in the region first and established the first village has (or have) the authority over the entire village confederacy. All the other clans that have arrived after them rely on this clan (or clans) for permission to settle and establish villages. Primary occupation gives the first clan the power over the land and over land allocation within the confederacy. The leader of the land-owning clan is the **mori tana**, the 'lord of the land' of the entire territorial unity. However, this clan does not hold ultimate political power and authority within the region. Some of the accounts relate struggles and wars between the **mori tana** clan and those that came later (ibid:354-364 383,386,428-430). These conflicts resulted in a dual division of power and authority. While losing political power within the region, the first clan(s) retained ritual power and ultimate authority over matters concerning the earth's fertility. The clan (or clans) that won the wars, in contrast, holds political power and is (are) primarily responsible for securing the confederacy against outside forces. This theme -- that title belongs to the group that was believed to have taken possession of the territory first, and that its political power was usurped by a group that arrived later -- is widespread in Indonesia, as van Wouden (1968:31-62,75,134) and more recently others have shown (see Fox 1980b:109; Forth 1981:238,245-6,249; Traube 1986:51-53,54-58,102-102).

The **mori tana** of the most inclusive territorial unit allocates land to all the clans residing within the village confederacy. The leaders of these clans, in turn, allocate land to their various clan segments, whose leaders distribute their share among their branches.

These leaders are **mori tana** of the second order, since they are not only custodians of the land allocated to them but have the right further to dispose of it (Arndt 1954:474).

After this overview of the Ngadha social and political organization, we are in a position to continue the discussion on the correspondence between the concept of authority and the concept of divinity in Ngadha society. From the discussion, it will become clear that leaders at any level of organization encompass features associated with **Nitu** and **Déva**, the original ancestral mother and father of the Ngadha.

Among the Ngadha, the leaders of clans, clan segments, villages, and the political leaders of the confederacy are called **mosa laki**. According to Arndt's (1961:338) dictionary, **mosa** is used in the following senses:

> 1) 'very big', 'famous'; 2) 'masculine' when speaking of quadruped animals; 3) **mosa dzaga**, 'big' and 'thick'; **mosa meba**, 'rich' or 'wealthy'; **mosa ngaci**, 'wealthy', 'powerful', 'influential', 'noble', 'highly regarded', 'popular'; 4) 'lord', 'elder', 'leader', 'judge'; **mosa laki**, 'leader', 'judge', 'advisor'; **mosa mézé néé laki léva**, 'you(r) great and elevated advisors'; **mosa cuma**, 'the one who almost always lives on the field', 'settler'; **mosa nuca**, 'leader of the village'; **mosa puu**, 'the first (trunk) leader'.

Mosa laki are the first born male descendants of a founding father or mother of a clan (or clan segment) in a direct line; or when this is not possible, from the line of the next male relative of the founding member (Arndt 1954:425). Of course, clan membership depends upon whether the father has paid bridewealth for his wife. It is thus often the case that before the leader is installed and can take up residence in the clan house of his descent group, his own bridewealth is raised and paid by the whole descent group, if he has not completed the payments on his own (ibid:426). Sometimes the **mosa laki** is elected, or the office is acquired through achievement. This event happens when the most eligible individual lacks the necessary skills, knowledge, and personal abilities required for a

leader. However, the alternative choice is generally from the same line of descent (i.e., clan or lineage or sublineage) as the individual most eligible for the position through birth.

The **mosa laki** can therefore be viewed as the source and origin of society, in so far as they are the first-born males in direct line of descent from the founding fathers or mothers of their segmentary descent group, and are therefore the most closely connected to these ancestors. They are the most direct descendants of the first humans who originated from the union of **Nitu** and **Déva**. This theme of continuity is reinforced by the fact that the **mosa laki** inhabit the clan or lineage house, which represents the source or origin of the descent group. It is also significant in this respect that one of the expressions for the **mosa laki** is **mosa puu**, which may be glossed as the 'first, original eldest lord', but more literally as the 'trunk or stem lord' (ibid:427). Some of the glosses for **puu** include 'trunk of a tree', 'beginning', 'root', principle', 'origin', 'stem', 'base' (Arndt 1961:436). Just as **Nitu** and **Déva** are the source and origin of society, so in a different sense are the **mosa laki**.

The **mosa** of the clans, clan segments, and of the various territorial unities furthermore appear to embody the features of both divine ancestral parents, **Nitu** and **Déva**. Thus, in the context of the clan (or clan segment), we find that in the leader the nurturing and governing principles of divinity are united, as these provide for the continuity and order of society. This concept may be illustrated by considering the various roles and duties of the leader in Ngadha society.

The **mosa laki** as leaders of their clans, clan segments, villages, and the village confederacy have jural responsibilities which extend into every area of life. The **mosa laki** function as witnesses, mediators, and judges. They have the authority to punish the violators of social rules. However, the authority of the **mosa laki** is subject to public opinion. Certain matters moreover are left to be decided by **Déva**, the creator, by means of ordeals, such as the hot water ordeal or glowing iron ordeal (see Arndt 1954:523-541). The **mosa laki** begin judicial enquiries with the call **Déva, Déva bhé**; **bhé** means 'to call', to

name', 'to invite' (Arndt 1961:43). Thus, the entire expression can be translated as "**Déva** names or summons' -- which evidently refers to the guilty party.

In the case of marriage rule violations, for example, the **mosa laki** of the village and those of the resident clans assemble at the palm wine distillery, **loka tuca**. One of the younger members is selected to go to the top of the nearest mountain. From there, he proclaims the violation, naming the transgressors and the form of atonement required. While on top of the mountain, this leader calls himself **Déva**; and makes his judgement in **Déva**'s name (Arndt 1954:21). In their judgments about marriage violations, the **mosa laki** make public examples of the transgressors, and in this way reinforce order in society (ibid:20-37).

The mosa laki, the leaders, also participate in engagements and marriages in the capacity of witnesses and judges. They witness negotiations; and if there is an agreement between the parties, they perform the necessary rite to bring the event to a conclusion (ibid:34-77). Similarly, if the parties to a marriage wish to break the union, the **mosa** act as witnesses and perform the rite that dissolves the union. They also determine the amount of compensation the party initiating the breach is required to pay (ibid:360-361). The groups that have dissolved a union may not forge a new relationship without engaging the **mosa laki** to perform the appropriate rite of reconciliation. A similar function is fulfilled by the leader in the case of re-establishing lapsed ties with the clan or lineage house of either the father's or mother's side[1], or in the case of incorporation of a new member into the clan[2].

No public feast is celebrated without the presence of the **mosa**. The leaders generally receive the biggest and best parts of the sacrificial meal. They tend to get the head and liver of the animal (ibid:433). It therefore seems significant that these same pieces are offered to **Nitu** and **Déva** (and to spirits in general) in a sacrifice, as this further indicates the association of leaders with divinity.

In the various public ceremonies and feasts it is moreover the **mosa** who handle and wield the power of the ancestral sword, **ladza sucé**, and the ancestral lance, **bhudza kava**.

The **bhudza kava** plays an important role in selecting the **Xebhu** tree to be felled for the ritual post, **ngadhu** (Arndt 1954:191), the significance of which I shall discuss later on. In the ceremonial first planting of the grain crops, these two items, sword and lance, play an important symbolic role (ibid:210-24). Furthermore, these same implements are used in establishing the site for a new village. If the sword and lance, after being thrown, stand up in the ground, the site is an appropriate place for a new village (ibid:348-49). The association of the ancestral sword and lance with the leader indicates a connection between the **mosa** and the image of **Déva.** As noted, **Déva** is described as a stately old man, with a golden dagger or staff. The **bhudza kava** and **ladza sucé** may therefore be regarded as symbols of authority and masculinity. At the same time, these implements appear to embody the decisive power of **Déva.**

In the role of political leader of a village confederacy, formerly the primary function of the **mosa laki** was as war leaders. They were concerned with protecting the villages within their territorial domain, and exercised authority in matters of internal strife.The leader of the confederacy has the authority in matters of security. Just like **Déva** and the leaders of the segmentary descent groups, the political leader has definite jural powers. This deciding power manifests itself in the form of war, which brings about discontinuity in the sense that opponents are separated and boundaries are drawn between them. In the capacity of protector of his domain the **mosa laki** is comparable to the secular lords with executive power found elsewhere in Indonesia in the context of dual authority (see Francillon 1980:252-265; Schulte Nordholt 1980:237; Traube 1986:51-58,101-102).

In a number of respects, therefore, the leaders embody the masculine, governing, and jural character of **Déva.** In their role as judges, mediators, and witnesses they provide for the continuity of society. Like **Déva,** the ultimate judge and source of punitive action for violations of social norms, the **mosa laki** have the ultimate authority to punish violators and to restore order in society. As I discussed in the previous chapter, **Déva** punishes the violator of cultural order through his various spirit servants, by way of

illness,death,drought, famine, storms, and various other misfortunes. In their jural capacity, the **mosa laki** are thus the earthly counterparts of **Déva**.

Various expressions used to refer to the **mosa** also attest to this equivalence.The **mosa** are also called **culi**,'helmsman', and **cana koda**, 'ship's captain'. According to Arndt, **koda** is related to the Malay **nakoda**, 'ship's commander' (1954:426). In Béna, the village leader's title is **culu mangu léva, céko dzo mézé**, 'the head of the tall mast, and the tail of the great boat'(ibid:354). Another expression used to refer to the **mosa** is **késo culi**, which Arndt translates as 'the one who has the power or authority'. **Késo** means to control something with the hand (Arndt 1961:241), while **culi** is glossed as, among other things, 'rudder' (ibid:221). The complete version of this expression is **késo culi tanga dala. Tanga**, according to Arndt (1954:427) is probably the Malay **tenaga**, 'skill', while **dala** is 'star'. Thus, according to Arndt, the whole expression might mean 'the one who has power like the sun'. In Arndt's dictionary, however, we find that **tanga** is 'to search', 'to investigate' (1961:527). Since **dala** is 'star' (1961:64), the entire expression apparently refers then to 'someone who controls the boat's direction and searches the stars (i.e. navigates by the stars)'. All these phrases suggest the identity of an individual who is in charge, a governing, authoritive figure who parallels the representation of **Déva**.

Sometimes the **mosa laki** are designated by the same expression as is used to refer to **Déva**, and are therefore explicitly identified with the creator. They are thus called **Cebu cava zéta, léna késo culi**, which Arndt translates as the "highest governing law and judge' (1954:500). According to this ethnographer, **cava** is identified with the sky, so that by extension one might also say with **Déva**. In his dictionary, however, we are given the following glosses: **cebu** is 'grandfather' or ancestor' (1961:208); **cava** is 'old', 'yellow leaves of a **sirih** plant' (ibid:210); **zéta** is 'above' (ibid:634); **léna** is 'sky' (ibid:285); and **késo culi** is the 'one who controls the rudder'. Therefore, the phrase might more literally be translated as ' the old ancestor or grandfather in the sky, above, who controls the boat's rudder' (i.e., governs). Furthermore, some of the leaders, in their capacity as judges, also

have the title of **Déva**. Hence, the **mosa**, as leaders, embody the governing nature of **Déva** and his greatest and highest judgement (Arndt,1954:500). We can say, therefore, that the **mosa laki** is the representative of the masculine, governing principle of divinity, of the creator and father of humanity, **Déva**. This symbolic masculinity is consistent with one of the earlier mentioned gloss of **mosa**, namely that of a 'male animal'.

The **mosa laki**, however, can also be regarded as mother of his descent group or village. As I discuss below, the **mosa** is, in several respects, represented as a source of life, generative potential, and continuity comparable to **Nitu**, the feminine aspect of divinity. As leader of his segmentary descent group or village the **mosa laki** is moreover a **mori tana**, or 'land lord', of the second order[3]; that is, he is the 'lord of the the land', and so has the responsibility for all matters relating to the land that was allocated to him by the first order **mori tana**, the 'lord of the land' of the village confederacy (Arndt 1954:202,211). We see, therefore, that the **mosa laki** is also a kind of **mori tana**, while conversely a **mori tana** is also a **mosa**. Thus it is clear that we are to some extent dealing with different statuses that are, or can be, occupied by the same person or group, rather than with completely separate functionaries.

The 'land lords', **mori tana**, have a number of responsibilities that are connected with the land, agriculture, hunting,rain, ritual duties at various feasts, products of the land and forest, livestock, and property in general. In connection with property, they are the guardians of the bamboo grove, coconut plantation, and water buffalo herds that are owned by the descent group. Furthermore, they are the custodians of family treasures (heirlooms) that are stored in the clan house. Thus, in several respects, as it will become clearer from the discussion to follow, the leaders, in their capacity as **mori tana**, are associated with sources of life, continuity, and generative potential in a way comparable to **Nitu**.

Land allocation and disposal ultimately require the **mori tana**'s permission, be it at the organizational level of the clan, village, or village confederacy (Arndt 1954:209,425-427,476). The **mori tana** mediates and resolves all conflicts arising from land and border

disputes. He has the ultimate authority in such quarrels (ibid:383,386). Whether or not the **mori tana** of a village confederacy, village, clan, or clan segment is involved in making the decision over land conflicts depends on the level of organization at which the dispute occurs. For example, if the quarrel over land, or over a particular property, is between clans within the same village, then the clan leaders take the matter to the village leader to resolve (ibid:210). If the disputing groups do not agree with his resolution a feud may ensue before the the matter is resolved. Such feuds may occur between clan segments of the same clan, between clans of the same village, and between villages of the same village confederacy (ibid:388). Generally a neutral **mosa** will step in and negotiate peace between the feuding factions. Some of the disputes over land and other holdings are resolved by some sort of competition, such as a swimming race, horse race, or the like. On these occasions the **mori tana** act as mediators and witnesses (ibid:201-202).

Like **Nitu**, the **mori tana** is closely associated with the earth. To cut down trees or bamboo from communal land of any clan or territorial unity requires the permission of the **mori tana**. In this connection, it should be noted that the **Xebhu** tree prescribed for the ritual post, **ngadhu**,[4] has to be cut and purchased from the personal or retained land holding of the **mori tana** of the entire clan, **vocé** (ibid:191).[5] When the **ngadhu** is ceremonially carried to the site where a new clan segment, **cili-bhou**, is to settle, two men ride on top of it, one at either end. The one in the front end, or the 'head' end, is the leader of the **cili-bhou**, and is called **saka puu** (Arndt 1954:199); **saka** means 'to ride' and **puu** is 'stem','origin' ,'source', 'base', and 'trunk' (Arndt 1961:436,483). Thus we find an association between 'head' or front and 'trunk' or 'origin', which is consistent with the earlier discussed semantic connection between 'head' and 'origin' throughout Indonesia. The other man, who rides the opposite end of the post, the 'tip' end, is the leader of the first **sipo pali** to branch off; and he is called **saka lobo** (Arndt 1954:199), **lobo** meaning 'tip' or 'top end' (Arndt 1961:300).[6] The **ngadhu** is thus a symbol of segmentary bifurcation and a material expression of continuity of the descent group; so it is significant that the tree for the ritual

post originates from the land of the **mori tana,** who is also represented as a 'source' or 'origin' in the sense that he was the first to settle the land, and in a number of ways appears to be a representation of **Nitu** on earth.

The connection of the 'land lord' with the life-giving and regenerative character of **Nitu** is further implicit in the responsibility of the **mori tana** of the village confederacy in respect of certain rituals. These include the rites leading up to and including the preparation of new fields belonging to the clans of a village confederacy, and the first planting. In this capacity all the other, secondary **mori tana** assist the 'land lord' of the domain; but he has the primary role and function in these rites (Arndt 1954:198,210-24,388).

The **mori tana** also plays an important role in the general hunt, the **para vitu,** which is one of the rituals that precedes the first planting. It takes place in August. The **mori tana** of the village confederacy is the **mori vitu,** 'the lord of the hunting grounds'. The general hunt comes under his full jurisdiction. Moreover, he is considered the owner of the game just as in another sense **Nitu** is owner of the game and hunting grounds (Arndt 1937:365,1960b:207,209). Before the hunt an offering is made to **Nitu,** the Earth Mother, or to the **nitu,** the spirits of the deceased.[7] It is, therefore, more than clear that the **mori tana** is identified with **Nitu** (or **nitu**) in this context as well. The **mori tana** leads the annual general hunt (Arndt 1954:488-89). Before the hunt, he informs the leaders of all the participating villages, i.e., the **mori tana** of the second order, of the time the hunt is to begin. On the same evening that he sends his message, moreover, his hands and feet are bound together so that the deer and wild pigs will not escape the hunters. It may be inferred, then, that he is identified with the game, and hence with **Nitu,** the source of the game. When everyone is ready to begin the hunt, it is the **mori tana** who has to give the first signal to begin burning the dry vegetation in order to drive out the animals. No one may begin setting fire before his signal, or the violator will encounter misfortune during the hunt. Wilcox (1952:657-573) provides a full account of the ritual hunt as it is performed by the Soa people in the central part of the Ngadha region.

The success of the hunt is therefore dependent on the **mori tana**. Since the hunt is regarded as a preparation for the beginning of the agricultural season and is believed to promote the fertility of the fields as well as that of humans (Arndt 1960b:206), the success of the hunt ensures the biological continuity of the community. In this sense, then, the **mori tana** can be considered as a source of nourishment and regenerative power in a similar manner to **Nitu**. Just as **Nitu** is connected with the cycle of life, so are the ritual activities of the **mori tana** connected with recurring events. This concept is also implied in his role in the agricultural rites, which I discuss below.

The general hunt is followed by the preparation of the fields and the first planting. During the **moni cuma**, 'consecration of a newly acquired plot of land' (Arndt 1961:336), which involves the preparation and planting of the newly acquired, communally owned fields of the territorial unit (or clan), the **mori tana** of the region along with the leaders of various descent groups and of villages within his territory assemble with their powerful ancestral swords and lances,[8] and with other items from among the heirlooms of their clan or lineage (Arndt 1954:210-211,388). They also carry bamboo lances and Enau palm leaves as symbols of fertility. These items they stick in front of the fieldhuts, and at the sacrifice site in the middle of the field, which is composed of three upright and three flat stones. The three upright stones are symbolically masculine, whereas the three flat stones are feminine. The **mori tana** of the highest order then rests the **ladza sucé**, the ancestral lance, on his shoulder. After the planting of the field is completed, the lances and the Enau are pulled out of the ground. The lances and the Enau may, I suggest, be regarded as objects that conduct fertility to the fields, and as phallic symbols. Furthermore, they appear reminiscent of **Déva**'s golden dagger or staff. Although the **mori tana** appear to be symbolically feminine in a number of respects, their planting of the lances and Enau in the ground clearly exhibits a masculine feature identifiable with **Déva**. As noted, **Déva** is thought to have fertilized **Nitu** in the primeval union, from which humanity, and all

animals and vegetation originated; and so this act of the 'land lords' may be seen as a symbolic re-enactment of this union.

The **mori tana** of the territory also conducts the first planting of rice, which is done in secret, in **zoä zoko**. In this way, it is thought, nothing can cause harm and damage to the fields. Arndt (1954:476-77) provides an example of the proceedings from the Guru Sina region. Planting has to be completed before any other members of the community of the **mori tana** do so. In the field he must plant with closed eyes, so that the birds will not find the seeds. Since the **mori tana** is here clearly identified with the birds, as he is with game during the hunt, it would appear that he may be associated with wild animals in general. As an alternative interpretation, we might regard this act of the 'land lord' as an indication that the **mori tana** has power over the birds, or wild animals in general, who must imitate his actions; that is, must do as he does.

The success of the fields of the community in general depends on the success of the personal field of the **mori tana**. Anybody who harms his field, or interferes with his planting, is believed to be punished by his wife becoming infertile or suffering a miscarriage. This concept implies that the fertility of the fields is intimately associated with human fertility and continuity, which also is apparently controlled by the 'land lord'. We have already encountered this theme in the context of the hunt. It should also be pointed out that engagements, marriages, and human fertility rites, called **bo logo**, usually take place during the period of the hunt and first planting (Arndt 1954:133,150; 1960:211,220). Like **Nitu**, therefore, the **mori tana** can be regarded as the source of life, generative potential, nurture, and the continuity of the biological or natural order.

Also in a manner similar to **Nitu**, the **mori tana** is associated with life-giving fluids and rain. In case of drought, it is the responsibility of the regional **mori tana** to perform the necessary rites that will bring rain (Arndt 1954:293-294,390). One of the rites involves assembling all village leaders within the confederacy. One of the men then descends into the land of the **nitu**, the collective ancestral spirits. To accomplish this journey an ivory

tusk is lowered into a lake, where it is thought to change into the image of the leader who was chosen to deal with the **nitu**. Although Arndt is not quite clear on the matter, it is possible that the ivory tusk is identified with the soul or spirit of the leader, so that in this respect the ceremony may be comparable to shamanistic soul travel into the underworld. However, Arndt's ethnographic data on the Ngadha does not clarify why an ivory tusk is used in this ceremony; and all we find out about the role of tusks is that they are generally an item of wealth. In this connection, I should mention the myth discussed earlier from the Nagé region, in which the hero, Lalo Sue, descends into a pool of water, into the village of the **nitu**; and upon successfully completing his task returns with items of wealth. The word Sue which is part of the hero's name means 'ivory' (Forth 1989. pers. comm.) Thus Forth suggests a possible connection between the Ngadha use of ivory tusk in the above mentioned rite and the Nagé myth with respect to descending into the land of the **nitu**, which here too is represented by a pool of water and is accomplished by someone called 'ivory'. In an alternative rite for rain, the **mori tana** of the village confederacy may designate one of the assembled leaders to conduct a sacrifice to **Nitu Déva** in order to bring about rain (Arndt 1960b:247-48).[9] The **mori tana**, albeit in an intermediary capacity, is therefore responsible for rainfall. In any case, his participation is apparently essential. Recalling the idea of **Nitu** as a source of rain, we see then that the **mori tana** is identifiable with **Nitu** in yet another respect.

As has been demonstrated, the leader in his role of **mori tana** has a nurturing role which connects him with the cyclical events of life. Thus he is the continuous source of life and continuity for his community. He embodies the generative potential of the Earth Mother, **Nitu**. The nurturihg and maternal role of the **mori tana** is further implicit in the various expressions used to refer to him. **Susu lobo soro cana**, 'the provider of milk for the children',[10] and **ciné tana**,'the mother of the land', imply the nurturing and maternal role of the **mori tana**. He is furthermore addressed as **mosa puu**, 'the origin' or 'first lord' (a

term which is also applied to the leaders in their capacity as **mosa laki**), and as **mosa ciné**, 'mother lord'. Both terms imply origins and sources of being.

The foregoing discussion has shown how the leader in Ngadha society functions as both mother and father of his community with respect to the nurturing and governing roles that he fulfills, roles that are identifiable with those of **Nitu** and **Déva.** The leaders then have functions both of conjunction and disjunction. They provide for their community natural or biological order in the role of **mori tana,** and they are the source of life and regenerative power. In the role of **mosa laki,** in contrast, they have a regulatory function. They maintain order in the community by settling disputes and separating opposite factions in confrontations. They draw the boundaries between opponents and punish transgression, thus providing for order. Yet, in this regulatory capacity, the **mosa** also provide for cultural continuity.

III

From the evidence presented above, it would appear that the widespread Indonesian model of dual opposition between the ritual leader and secular authority is present among the Ngadha as well, particularly at the most inclusive level of territorial organization. However, ritual and jural authority are matters pertaining both to the level of the village confederacy and that of the clan. In some respects, the political organization of the village mirrors that of the confederacy. Yet it seems that the two types of authority are more distinct the higher the level of organization. They are most distinct at the level of the whole territorial domain; and accordingly less distinct at the level of particular villages, clans, and clan segments.

At the level of the confederacy, the **mori tana** embodies the nurturing aspect of divinity, **Nitu,** for his entire region. All life, the reproductive cycle, and continuity are dependent on his ritual activity. The **mosa laki,** the political leader of the confederacy, on the other hand,

embodies the jural and governing nature of **Déva**. He protects the inhabitants of the territory from enemies outside the territory, and he maintains order within his domain against internal strife.

At the level of segmentary descent groups (**vocé, cili-bhou, sipo pali**) the leaders of these groups are both **mosa** and **mori tana** of the second order. They encompass the nurturing and governing aspects of **Nitu** and **Déva**. Thus, within the leaders of the segmentary descent groups are united the sources of continuity both in the natural and cultural realms. Figure 11 illustrates the distribution of authority in the two levels of political and social organization.[11]

Village Confederacy (higher level of social integration)	Segmentary descent group (lower level of social integration)
roles of authority: divided	roles of authority: included
mori tana ≠ mosa laki	**mori tana = mosa laki**
ritual leader : political leader	both ritual and political leader
nurturing : governing	both nurturing and governing

Figure 11. Distribution of authority and associated roles.

Since the political leader of the domain is only responsible for keeping peace within the domain and protecting it from outside threats through his military force, it would appear that internal jural and political matters are dealt with more thoroughly by the lower level groupings, at the level of the segmentary descent group and at the level of the village. On the other hand, ritual cyclic affairs that concern the continuity and well-being of the entire domain are the concerns of a higher level of social grouping, involving the domain as a whole. Since this pattern is widespread in eastern Indonesia we might consider at least one comparative example, namely the Umalulu region of eastern Sumba. In Umalulu the secular leaders (and their clans) are called **maràmba**, whereas the spiritual leaders (and their clans) are called **ratu**. The **ratu** (ritual leader) clans are regarded not only as as the highest spiritual authority in the domain, but as the 'owners of the land' as well. These two

types of leaders are thus comparable to the **mosa laki** of the village confederacy and to the **mori tana** of the first order in Ngadha. In Umalulu we find that "...the secular leaders, by contrast to the spiritual leaders can be said to represent segmentary interests" (Forth 1981:242). Political matters are therefore more the concern of the lower level groups, of the **maràmba** (noble) clans, than are ritual matters. In contrast, the **ratu** (ritual leader) clans, like the **mori tana** of the first order in Ngadha, are primarily concerned with ritual affairs; and are the unifiers of the domain (ibid:241). The unity of the domain is accordingly expressed in major renewal ceremonies organized by the **ratu** (ibid).

As we have seen in the previous chapter, **Déva**, the creator, is the all-encompassing entity in the context of Ngadha cosmology. The masculine, governing aspect and the feminine, nurturing aspect of divinity thus both find an expression in **Déva. Nitu** and **Déva** form a unity which is an expression of totality. Yet they are not simply complementary opposites existing at the same level of contrast that make up a divided unity. **Déva** encompasses the contrary term, **Nitu**; and so stands for the totality composed of both **Déva and Nitu**.

At the level of the segmentary descent group, the leader, who has the roles of both **mosa laki** and **mori tana**, similarly represents the masculine, governing, and the feminine, nurturing nature of divinity. Thus, in the same way that **Déva** encompasses **Nitu**, the role of **mosa laki** encompasses that of the **mori tana**. The correspondence between the religious sphere and the division of authority may be represented as in Figure 12.[12] ,whereas the totality of authority and its correspondence with the concept of divinity with respect to segmentary descent group organization is illustrated in Figure 13.

Mosa laki	Mori tana
Déva	Nitu
sky	earth
governing	nurturing
discontinuity	continuity

Figure 12. The corresponding nature of figures of authority with Nitu and Déva

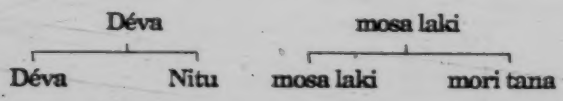


Figure 13. Correspondence between divinity and roles of authority at the segmentary descent group level

At the level of territorial organization, on the other hand, the unity of the whole region is expressed in the interdependence of the two types of authorities. The political leader, **mosa laki**, is dependent on the ritual services of the **mori tana** of the domain for the continuity and well-being of his clan, as are all the other clans occupying the confederacy. In the same manner, the **mori tana** of the domain and his clan, and all other clans and villages, depend on the political leader for secular protection. However, the level of the segmentary descent group and the territorial level are not mutually exclusive. The two levels interact with one other and are parts of one other, so that the continuity of society is insured. Thus, in the political organization of the Ngadha there exists a part-whole relationship which can be seen to parallel the unity of Nitu Déva .

Authority at the level of the territorial domain as a whole can be represented as in Figure 14.

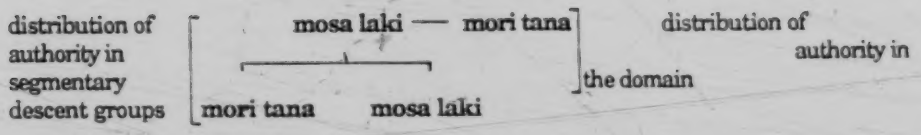

distribution of authority in segmentary descent groups
mosa laki — mori tana
mori tana mosa laki
distribution of authority in the domain

Figure 14. Distribution of authority in the context of the domain as a whole

As Figure 14. illustrates, the **mori tana** and **mosa laki** of the confederacy have dual functions with respect to the domain as a whole and to their own clans respectively, which is the result of the segmentary nature of Ngadha society. The **mosa laki** of the confederacy is, at the same time, not only **mosa laki** of his own descent group but its **mori tana** of the second order as well. Likewise, the **mori tana** of the domain fulfills the roles of the **mosa laki** and **mori tana** for his own clan.

As noted in Chapter Five, in the context of providing for the biological continuity of humanity, and thus nurture, **Nitu** encompasses **Déva**; whereas in most other contexts **Déva**, the governing figure, is the encompassing entity. This concept can be seen to parallel the distribution of authority with respect to ritual and temporal, or jural, affairs. In the same way that **Nitu** is the 'owner of the earth' and is the source of life, the **mori tana** is the 'owner of the land'; and he fulfils cyclical functions which secure the continuity of life, especially with regard to the domain as a whole. This concordance between the functionaries and divinity and the distribution of authority at the two principal levels of social integration can be illustrated as in Figure 15a and 15b.[13]

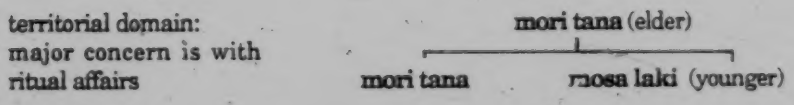


Figure 15a. Distribution of power with respect to ritual and temporal affairs at the level of the confederacy .

segmentary descent group: major concern is with jural matters	mosa laki		Déva	
	mosa laki	mori tana	Déva	Nitu

Figure 15b. Distribution of power with respect to ritual and temporal affairs at the level of the segmentary descent groups and the concordance with the governing aspect of divinity.

Figure 15a illustrates the way the **mori tana** of the first order encompasses **mosa laki** in the context of ritual affairs of the domain. Since the **mori tana** in most respects is symbolically equivalent to **Nitu**, the feminine aspect of divinity, the question arises whether there might be any context in which **Nitu** encompasses **Déva**. This possibility is suggested as well by Dumont's analytical model of hierarchical opposition. As I discussed in Chapter Five, the dead are generally believed to become a type of **nitu**, earth spirits; and find their home with **Nitu**, where they have to work and provide for themselves in the same way as when they were alive. In the special case of accidental, violent, or untimely death -- 'bad' death -- in contrast, the dead are said to go to **Déva**, where they are provided for. Thus in the context of death and the home of the dead, **Nitu** might be regarded as the encompassing entity, since the role of **Déva** in providing a home for the dead is limited to special cases. Similarly, with respect to the fertility of the fields and human beings, and thus the biological continuity of humanity in connection with the immediacy and nurturing attributes of **Nitu** as opposed to the governing remoteness of **Déva**, **Nitu** appears to be the more prominent figure. The role of **Déva** in the biological continuity of humanity appears to be limited to two situations. First, he is regarded as the progenitor of the first human ancestors through his union with **Nitu**. The second situation involves his role in providing rain, which again he accomplishes by sexual union with Mother Earth, as his semen is symbolically equated with rain. In the context of biological continuity, therefore,

Nitu might be seen as the unitary entity. The evidence based on Arndt's data is, however, inconclusive.

The aspects of Ngadha society discussed above have been analyzed in the framework of Dumont's (1970,1986) thesis of hierarchical opposition. I discussed this approach, and contrasted it to Needham's (1973) in the last chapter. At a certain level **Nitu** and **Déva**, as well as the **mori tana** and **mosa laki**, are distinct, opposed, and complementary parts of a set. They form a complementary pair that builds a unity -- divinity and authority, respectively. On the other hand, in the same way that **Déva** encompasses **Nitu**, so the **mosa** encompasses the **mori tana**, specifically in the context of the segmentary level of social organization. This pattern is reversed, however, at another level. As a result of the segmentary nature of Ngadha society, the **mori tana** and **mosa laki** of the confederacy have dual functions with respect to the territory as a whole and to their own clans respectively. Thus, they each encompass the other depending upon the level of organization at which they exercise their authority. This pattern is clearly demonstrated with respect to jural and ritual affairs. As I pointed out above, ritual affairs are more the concern of the domain as a whole, and thus concern the regional **mori tana**. Jural affairs, in contrast, are rather the concern of the segmentary descent groups; and therefore are left to the **mosa laki** of those groups. There is a mutual interdependence of ritual and jural authority both at the level of clan and territorial organization. Therefore, ritual and jural authority not only complement each other and make up the totality or authority. They also encompass one another depending on the context and level of the organization at which they operate. Each is part of the other, so that in this respect as well a part-whole relationship becomes evident in the analysis of the roles of authority in Ngadha society.

IV

As mentioned previously, the Ngadha have an ambilineal system of social organization. Descent group membership can be acquired through either the mother or the father. Affiliation through either parent is equally important. This theme is implicit, for example, in two stories recounted by Arndt (1954:171-175). In both of these accounts, a particular clan was dying out since they experienced a number of natural disasters which killed their livestock and crops, and because the clan members were not reproducing. In one of the cases, the lack of generative potential for life was attributed to the fact that, whereas the clan had maintained ties with the clan house of the founding father, it has let ties lapse with the clan house of the founding mother. In order to secure the continuity of the group, therefore, reconciliation had to take place and ties had to be reestablished. In the other story, in contrast, the ties were maintained with the clan house of the founding mother; but these had to be reestablished with the clan house of the founding father. Only through reconciliation was the continuity of life, and thus that of the group secured. The equal importance of father and mother is, therefore, emphasized. The encompassing nature of the leader, **mosa laki**, and his joint roles as 'mother and father' of his segmentary descent group are hence arguably consistent with this aspect of the Ngadha ambilineal organization.

Victor T. King (1980) in a paper entitled "Structural Analysis and cognatic Societies: Some Borneo Examples", expands upon Needham's thesis concerning the relation of the symbolic to the social order. He focuses on cognatic societies rather than on lineal systems of descent, particularly the type of lineal system which accompanies prescriptive alliance. Needham's (1960a:105) argument is that a close relation between social and symbolic order only exists in those unilineal systems that also practice prescriptive marriage alliance. Although, in certain respects, King agrees with

Needham that "in cognatic societies the relation of symbolic order may be insignificant or minimal" (ibid:1), he nevertheless advances the argument that in cognatic societies:

> ...which possess or appear to have possessed in the past a stratified social system with a division between aristocrats and commoners, there seems to be some concordance between social and symbolic order (1980:26).

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that the Ngadha exhibit a concordance between the social and symbolic orders, at least in the context of authority and leadership roles. However, the Ngadha are neither unilineal nor do they practice any form of marriage alliance. They also do not have a cognatic system of descent of the sort that the Bornean societies, considered by King, do. In contrast to the Bornean groups, the Ngadha trace descent to an apical ancestor, even though it can be traced through either males or females. Thus the Ngadha segmentary organization shows lineal features. The Ngadha, therefore, do not appear clearly to fit either Needham's or King's models. Yet a concordance between the symbolic and social realm does exist to a certain degree, as I have demonstrated above. However, it does not appear to be the result of social stratification, as King's model would suggest; and it would appear that the lineal features of Ngadha society probably account for the correlations between the two orders.

As shown, the greatest level of correspondence between **Nitu** and **Déva** and **mori tana** and **mosa laki** is found at the segmentary descent group level. Furthermore, it is at this level that the **mosa laki** displays an encompassing nature which is formally identical to that of **Déva**. Therefore, in the Ngadha case at least, neither a ranked social organization nor prescriptive marriage alliance produces a concordance between the social and symbolic order; so this case suggests that Needham's argument needs to be revised, particularly with respect to lineality (but not necessarily the practice of asymmetric marriage alliance) as a factor which can possibly account for the correspondence between the two orders.

We might consider, however, yet another interpretation of the concordance we have found between the social and symbolic realms in Ngadha. As I have shown, there also appears to be a correspondence between the encompassing quality of **Nitu** and that of the **mori tana** of the first order with respect to providing or securing biological continuity for humanity; that is, the continuity of the cycle of life for human beings. This concordance, however, is not a function of the segmentary organization of Ngadha society, which would suggest that the close relation between the social and symbolic order has more to do with the encompassing nature of leadership roles. As noted above, in my examination of the Ngadha material I have used Dumont's analytic framework of hierarchical opposition, which accommodates the Ngadha data quite well. Needham and King, on the other hand, consider concordance between social and symbolic orders in the context of complementary opposition. An examination of the relationship between the two orders, therefore, might be more fruitful if considered within the context of Dumont's hierarchical opposition. Perhaps a change in the methods of analysis could shed more light on the relationship between social and symbolic orders within cognatic as well as lineal societies, and thus we might find that this sort of concordance exists in a far greater range of societies than was previously thought.

In this chapter I have considered the correspondence that can be seen to exist between the Ngadha conceptions of divinity and authority. I have found a concordance between **Nitu** and **Déva**, the dual concepts of divinity, and **mosa laki** and **mori tana**, the main political and ritual positions in Ngadha society. The distribution of authority, as we have seen, occurs at two principal levels -- at the level of the clan and at the level of the territorial domain -- and is related to the segmentary nature of social organization. The correspondence between the dual concept of divinity and positions of authority, however, appears to be the function of the encompassing nature of the aspects of divinity and that of leadership roles. A change in the methodology was thus suggested in the analysis of the

relation of the symbolic to the social order. More specifically, a wider use of Dumont's analytic framework was recommended, in contrast to the more frequently employed framework of Needham.Through a study of the Ngadha of Flores, I have also attempted to demonstrate the utility of analyzing the concept of **nitu** within the framework of the notions of 'source', 'origin', and 'continuity', since this framework appears to have relevance for both the religious and social realms.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY REMARKS

In this enquiry I have attempted to provide a comprehensive discussion of the wide-spread Austronesian term **nitu**, with two main goals in mind.

My first aim was to bring together the available data on the concept of **nitu**, which is scattered throughout the ethnographic literature. The accounts of the category of spirits called **nitu** are mostly descriptive in nature, and lack analysis. In spite of the fact that this category forms both a lexical and conceptual unity and has a wide distribution, it has not yet been dealt with comparatively or comprehensively .

In Chapter Two I examined the extent of the distribution of this concept. With the exception of the Eastern Malayo-Polynesian group of the Austronesian language family, I found the term **nitu** and various cognate terms, all of which are reflexes of the PAN ***anitu**, in all subgroups of this family, namely in the Formosan, Western Malayo-Polynesian, Central Malayo-Polynesian, and Oceanic. This result indicated that the category of **nitu** forms both a lexical and a conceptual unity. Both the form and the conceptual associations of this term have survived the expansion of the Austronesian speakers, and thus the divergence of the linguistic subgroups. I also demonstrated that **nitu** is a polythetic concept ,which is to say that no one single element of the category of **nitu** is common to all the societies that I have examined. The term primarily applies to the spirits of the deceased (collective ancestral spirits), and secondarily to nature spirits. From this Chapter ,it became evident that there exist a number of associations of the concept of **nitu** which are best analyzed and interpreted in the context of notions of source, continuity, generative potential, and cosmic order, which were the subject of Chapter Three.

In Chapter Three, I concluded that in a number of respects the category of spirits called **nitu** can be regarded as sources of life, generative power, and continuity. The **nitu** are sources of continuity not only in the sense of natural order but indirectly of cultural order as well. Furthermore, in this discussion I gave consideration to the material expression of

the conception of the ancestral **nitu** as the source or origin of their descendants and of their continuity, and especially to the principal houses of descent groups. Some of the differences between the Western Malayo-Polynesian and Central Malayo-Polynesian conception of the category of **nitu** were also considered.

In Chapter Four I examined some comparative material concerning certain categories of spirits in mainland Southeast Asia and in other Austronesian-speaking communities which are not named with cognates of **nitu**. My reason for doing so derived from the the apparent representational or structural similarities between the conception of **nitu** and these other categories of spirits. I found that as regards the Austronesian speakers the similarities between those categories of spirits that are designated by an unrelated term and the category of **nitu** indeed tended to be both representational and structural, while as regards non-Austronesian speakers the similarity appeared to be strictly representational. I attributed this difference between the Austronesian and the non-Austronesian categories of spirits to a general difference of cosmology.

My second aim in this thesis has been to counter the way religious systems have tended to be analyzed in Indonesia, through an analysis of the conception of **nitu** in general and through the analysis of this conception in the Ngadha society in particular. As I pointed out in the introduction, religious systems in Indonesia have tended to be analyzed in the context of the classical anthropological typologies of descent and marriage alliance; and more specifically in the framework of unilineal descent and asymmetric marriage alliance. In the course of this work I have also re-evaluated Needham's thesis that correspondences between the symbolic and social order exist most clearly in those societies that possess descent and alliance systems of the kinds just mentioned.

As I have shown, the concept of **nitu** is found among a wide range of societies, many of which have cognatic, or ambilineal, rather than unilineal descent systems. Some of the groups practice asymmetric alliance, but others possess no form of alliance. Yet the term **nitu**, and the spirit categories it entails, are generally associated with certain underlying

concepts, namely the concepts of 'origin', 'source', 'order', and 'continuity', which, at least in the Ngadha case, appear to have importance in both the symbolic and social realms. We have seen that the **nitu** can be regarded as the source and origin of human and vegetative life, and as a source of order in the universe. These major themes and associations of **nitu** have been shown to occur in most societies that have this concept as part of their religious ideology.

In Chapters Five and Six my aim in examining the Ngadha of Flores was to demonstrate through a single detailed case study the usefulness of analyzing the concept of **nitu** in relation to these major themes, and to show how similar principles are present in both the social and symbolic orders. Since the Ngadha neither have unilineal descent nor practise asymmetric connubium, this society served as a useful test case.

In Chapter Five I gave special consideration to the Ngadha conception of **nitu**, since this group is apparently unique in associating **nitu** with a single earth deity, **Nitu**. In this endeavor I demonstrated that among these people **Nitu** also forms part of the concept of Divinity. **Nitu**, as the Earth Mother, is the feminine aspect of divinity, a conception which affirms the connection with the themes of 'source', 'continuity', and generative potential. In the following chapter I then examined similar themes and principles that occur both in the Ngadha conception of divinity and in their socio-political organization, especially in roles and attributes of authority.

From this I concluded that there exists a correspondence between the social and symbolic order, which I have suggested is related to the segmentary descent system. Since the Ngadha appear clearly to contradict Needham's thesis, I suggested a re-evaluation of his approach. On the one hand, I suggested that the correspondences found in the Ngadha social and symbolic order may be related to the lineal features of their ambilineal organization; and thus that lineality, rather than prescriptive marriage systems, may be the relevant factor accounting for correspondences between the two orders in this case. Yet further consideration of other ambilineal groups would be necessary in order to confirm

this interpretation. It is also possible that lineality may not be the issue at all. Instead, we may need to change our methods in analyzing the relation between social and symbolic orders. As was noted, previous methods were based on Needham's approach of complementary opposition, whereas I have used Dumont's analytic framework of hierarchical opposition. The latter method proved to be a more fruitful approach in analyzing the Ngadha material. Perhaps the application of Dumont's approach would be a more useful analytical tool; and could highlight concordances between the social and symbolic realms in any society, regardless of type of descent or the presence or absence of marriage alliance. Furthermore, a consideration of the whole concept of descent (or ascent) in Fox's (1988) sense, and the way this concept is connected with notions of source and origin, might also contribute to our understanding of the correspondences found between the social and symbolic realms in eastern Indonesia.

I am not suggesting here that we should discard the anthropological categories of descent and alliance in analyzing religious and symbolic systems. In the analysis of the concept of nitu, at least, these categories clearly have a place; but only in so far as they also take into account such major organizing themes as source, origin, continuity, and order. I would point out, moreover, that we should not fall into the temptation of viewing religious systems strictly in relation to descent and alliance systems; at least, not using these categories as traditionally conceived. What we need is a re-definition and reevaluation of these anthropological categories, as Fox (1988) suggests in his lecture. He draws our attention to the fact that such conceptions as the ideas of origins and source -- source of life and place of origin-- which are prominent in Indonesia, and especially in the eastern Indonesia, might better express the notion of descent than our traditional anthropological conception of the analytical category.

I also do not wish to suggest that the ethnographers who posited correspondences between the social and symbolic order in particular unilineal societies with prescriptive marriage alliance were wrong. The correspondences may indeed be found in the context of

the particular societies they have studied. Rather, my argument is with the focus in these studies, which has tended to rest too heavily on unilineal societies with asymmetric marriage alliance, a focus which originated with the Leiden school and in connection with J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong's designation of Indonesia as a 'Field of Anthropological Study'. Perhaps the focus needs to be shifted so as to encompass more securely the ambilineal and bilateral societies as well, in order better to understand the unity which appears to be present in Indonesia. Here, by unity I mean the underlying principles or structures which organize the social order and religious beliefs of the peoples of Indonesia.

Before I conclude this section, one further issue requires attention. As I pointed out in the introduction, this thesis is based on a study of the available ethnographic literature, and thus on secondary sources. For a number of purposes, Paul Arndt's numerous publications on the island of Flores and other parts of eastern Indonesia were my main sources on the concept of **nitu**. I used his ethnographic descriptions in my analysis of the Ngadha in Chapters Five and Six as a way of demonstrating the usefulness of analyzing the concept of **nitu** in terms of 'source' and 'origin', as well as showing that correspondences between the social and symbolic realms can exist to a significant degree in an ambilineal society. Although Arndt left us the legacy of an enormous compilation of ethnographic data on the Ngadha of Flores, there is still a need for further research among these people. I am not suggesting a mere re-evaluation and re-analysis of data presented by this missionary, though his work sorely lacks in analysis. On the one hand, the information on the social organization of the Ngadha is incomplete, not only as regards kinship terminology but also in respect of the ambilineal features of the system. As noted in Chapter Five, some of Arndt's over-generalizations and extensions of his findings about the Ngadha, particularly as regards the concept of divinity, to other societies on Flores cast some doubt on his data, which might be clarified by further research. Furthermore, this missionary's data are more textual than sociological; and his collection of information on the Ngadha was not motivated by sociological issues.

Moreover, the changes in the cosmology of the Ngadha presumably wrought by rapid Christianization and Indonesian Independence need to be studied and assessed. I am interested, more specifically, in the question of how Ngadha views of themselves, and particularly these in relation to divinity and nature, have been affected. In this connection we need to discover the degree to which the elements of traditional religion, such as nitu, are still extant. Other questions concern the importance of the apparent underlying themes of source and origin in their present cosmology in the face of the reality of rapid change and modernization. Would we still find correspondences between the social and symbolic realms? Based on the old ethnographic descriptions by Arndt, I have shown that in the past at least there existed such a correspondence. The Ngadha, who have an ambilineal system, are bounded by ethnic groups which subscribe to a unilineal system of social organization. From further research we might also discover how the Ngadha compare with other Florinese groups, in the light of the research carried out recently by other, modern ethnographers; and thus be able to locate the Ngadha in the context of eastern Indonesia as a whole.

I think the Ngadha could serve as an appropriate object of study, not only to answer some of the specific questions raised in the context of existing descriptions of their society, but also in relation to the issues discussed above concerning the approach to analyzing religious systems, and with the aim of uncovering and better understanding the links which connect and shape the diverse populations of Indonesia into a unity. However, these issues cannot be resolved by library research alone, for such research can only serve as a background to further inquiry. Part of my aim in this study has therefore been to raise relevant issues concerning Indonesia as a Field of Anthropological Study which will require further ethnographic investigation in the field.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1 See Chapter Two for other cognates of **nitu**.

2 Asymmetrical marriage alliance (also known as the Dutch asymmetric connubium) is characterized by 'indirect exchange' of women (Robin 1967:208). "Wife-givers cannot be wife-takers; a group cannot *give* women to a group from which it has *taken* women" (ibid). In the simplest form of such a system, if group B takes women from group A, then it must give women to group C, which in turn must give women to a group other than B (ibid).

3 Although ambilineal descent is a kind of cognatic descent, in that descent can be traced either through the male or female line, it differs from other forms of cognatic descent in that descent is traced back to an apical ancestor.

4 See footnote 3.

CHAPTER TWO

1 This connection has not been established as a fact. I have not been able to find any cognates of **nitu** among the Thai-Kadai languages.

2 The symbolic connection between the fertility of the fields and that of humans in the Ngadha society of central Flores will be discussed in Chapter Six .

3 It is not clear from Downs's (1956) account whether these ideas are still present or are extinct among the Bare'e speaking Toraja.

4 That is, they blacken like indigo dye. Regarding the association between **nitu** and indigo see Fox 1973:350.

5 The idea that laughing at or mistreating animals can cause storms and floods is widespread in Insular Southeast Asia (see Needham 1964; Blust 1981; Forth 1989).

6 Bader (1970) has discussed the various associations between rainbow, snakes, and water spirits on the island of Flores.

7 This is no doubt a development from the introduction of cannons by the Portuguese.

8 Presumably these animal species are wild as opposed to domesticated.

9 These stand in opposition to those for whom the circumstances of death are not known. These individuals are presumed dead, as if disappeared for ever. Their spirits are called **no'arg**. It should be noted that among the Ngadha we also find a group of spirits that are called **noca**, as I shall discuss in Chapter Five. However, here **noca** refers to the spirit agents of the divinity.

10 I shall discuss the connection of this association with **nitu** to the themes of 'source' and 'origin' in the next chapter.

11 See footnote 5. concerning the "Thunder Complex".

12 The land of the dead for the Ngadha is also located in the sky with **Déva**, and on top of the Suri Laki (= Ebu Lobo) volcano in the neighbouring Nagé region.

13 It is conjointly said that **Déva :ena**, **Déva** has called him'.

14 Rain is also called as the water of **Déva** (Arndt 1937:195); and precipitation is believed to be the fertilization of **Nitu**, Mother Earth, by **Déva**, the Father Sky. Thus, through this union the fields yield their products to nourish humanity. In case of a drought a sacrifice may be made to **Nitu Déva** (Arndt 1960b:247).

15 See footnotes 13 and 14.

16 **Mata vae** is synonymous with **nitu vae** (Arndt 1936:356). These are spirits that reside in water sources. I shall discuss the significance of the term **mata**, as it pertains to **nitu**, in Chapter three.

17 It is interesting to note, however, that the term **nitu** or a cognate does not appear to occur in the Eastern Malayo-Polynesian languages. Furthermore, according to both Dempwolff's (1938) and to Wurm and Wilson's (1975) word list of PAN reconstructions, there does not appear to be a reconstruction for the term **nitu** in PEMP.

CHAPTER THREE

1 It should be noted, however, that head-hunting is not everywhere connected with the notion of source and fertility in insular Southeast Asia. Rosaldo's (1980:140) analysis of Ilongot head-hunting in the Philippines indicates that, at least among this people, "taking a head is a symbolic process designed less to acquire anything (whether so-called soul stuff or fertility) than to remove something" (underlining is mine). Among the Ilongot head-hunting is partly an aspect of the life-cycle rites, a male passage into adulthood. According to Rosaldo, by taking a head the participant is symbolically cleansed from the "contaminating burdens of their lives", and thus, the participant feels 'light' and invigorated(ibid).

2 In connection with the association of the head and generative (or creative) power, it is relevant to note Ngadha (Flores) ideas of procreation, particularly as they apply to situations where a marriage has been infertile.(Arndt,1954). Usually, a surrogate father is "hired"; and he will exchange a head cloth, or in some cases other personal belongings -- such as clothing or sword -- as well, with the husband and will have intercourse with the wife. However, the item that is always exchanged between the two men appears to be the head cloth. The child thus conceived will be regarded as the child of the husband and wife and not of the surrogate father. This practice therefore suggests a connection between head and generative potential, at least in this ritual context.

3 Among the Ngadha of Flores most prayers that request fertility for both humans and their fields are addressed to the ancestors.

4 Among the Ngadha, however, rain is also believed to originate from **Nitu** and **Déva**, the feminine and masculine aspects of divinity, a topic which I shall discuss in Chapter 5.

5 Both cloth and gold jewelry are items of exchange on the occasion of marriage (Arndt 1954).

6 Later on in this thesis I will discuss the concept of divinity among the Ngadha in more detail, and thus further clarify these statements.

7 It is of comparative interest that in early Hindu religion the **yaksis**, the female counterparts of the **nagas**, the earth deities, were often portrayed as voluptuous maidens (Bloss 1987:294).

8 See footnote 7.

9 See footnote 7.

CHAPTER FOUR

1 I will be concerned only with the indigenous **nats** and not those **nats** that are an extension of Buddhism. These latter are believed to inhabit the six lower abodes of heaven below the Brahma world (Enriquez 1923:33).

2 I should note, however, that among the Nagé of central Flores certain spirits that can be classified as kinds of **nitu** seem to be completely malevolent, particularly those that kill humans in the form of the buffalo (Forth 1989, pers. comm.). These spirits can be regarded as 'natural enemies' of human beings, so that, at least among the Nagé, we may find an exception to the apparent general pattern associated with the **nitu** in eastern Indonesia.On the other hand these specific spirits might be regarded as the malevolent aspect of **nitu** in general.

3 Very similar, or even identical, ideas and representations of the **naga** can be found across Indonesia (see Vatter 1935).

CHAPTER FIVE

1 In this connection, brief consideration should be given to a couple of other issues. First, I wish to address the question of the indigenous term for the Ngadha Creator, since **Déva** is the borrowed term. A second, but related concern is whether not only the term but the concept as well is ultimately borrowed from Hinduism. With regard to the first issue, Arndt's (1936: 899,904,908,909) data indicate that the Creator is also referred to as **Mori Mézé**, ' the great or highest lord', **Mori zéta**, 'the lord above', and **Mori Gaé**, ' the highest lord'; **mori** means 'lord', **mézé** means 'great' or 'big', **zéta** refers to 'above', and **gaé** means the highest rank or nobility in Ngadha society (Arndt 1961:337,321,634,164). These expressions, however, appear to be honorifics rather than the indigenous name(s) for the Creator. Arndt's data thus do not provide us with evidence for an indigenous term. On the other hand, it is still possible that there was no single original name for the Creator,while the concept of a Creator did originally exist. Such a situation is encountered among the the people of Tana 'Ai in the Sikka region. With regard to the Creator, Lewis (1988:45) reports that "...people... are adamant on the point that the actor (i.e. the agent of creation) is unknown and perhaps unknowable by men"; yet myths of creation, and more particularly concerns with origins are in fact an essential and very important part of Tana 'Ai culture (ibid). I therefore favour the view that the Ngadha concept of the Creator, the sky divinity, is an indigenous one which has come to be designated by a borrowed term.

2 As I will discuss below the collective ancestral spirits are also addressed by this expression. This form of address is not inappropriate since the ancestral **nitu** are also part of the **Nitu Déva** unity. I will show subsequently the form that this unity takes.

3 Rain is also requested from the ancestral **nitu** in certain instances (Arndt 1954).

4 The clan father of the entire Ngadha population is also represented in the form of an eagle or falcon (see Arndt,1954 concerning the erection of the sacrificial post (**ngadhu**).

5 Similar notions of soul capture which leads to the transformation of the soul into a water buffalo and its slaughter, which results in the death of the human, are also encountered among the Nagé, the eastern neighbours of the Ngadha (see Forth, in press).

6 In the discussions to follow I will be using **polo** and **vera-polo** interchangeably.

7 At the same time human witches on Flores may be either male or female. Arndt does not say much about the gender of human witches in Ngadha. Yet, in at least one instance we are told that the **polo** can be men, women, or children; and young or old people (Arndt 1954:446). Thus Pénard's claim that most witches on Flores are women might be exaggerated (1929:466).

CHAPTER SIX

1 Without the re-establishment of lapsed ties, it is believed that the group's continuity is in jeopardy -- that is, the lives and fertility of humans, livestock, and the productivity of the fields will suffer.

2 New members may be incorporated in a clan in the following circumstances: a) if there are no more male successors in the clan; b) when no bridewealth was paid and the husband is incorporated; c) when a child that was given in lieu of a debt is adopted. In any case the agreement of the clan giving up a member, as well as the one incorporating him or her, is required.

3 **Tana** means both 'land' and 'earth', so that, like **Nitu**, the **mori tana** is associated with the earth, which is opposed to the sky.

4 The **ngadhu** post is the ritual post of the **cili-bhou**. It embodies and represents the clanfather of the clan segment.

5 I believe that this is the **mori tana** of the **vocé**. Although Arndt does not make this clear, following the various descriptions, this would be consistent with the theme of continuity expressed in the process of segmentation of the clan, concerning the founding of clan houses, and the distribution of the ritual paraphernalia (1954:177-211).

6 Structurally speaking,therefore, the former individual is the elder or senior and the latter is the younger or junior of the two. It is a common and widespread theme in Indonesia that the religious leader of the domain is conceived as an elder brother, while the political leader is referred to as the younger brother (van Wouden 1968:30,53-54,62,114,134-35,141). Following Arndt's descriptions, this theme does not appear to be as pronounced among the Ngadha. Yet, there does seem to be some indication of an elder/younger distinction in this context. If we look at the division of authority from a chronological perspective, the leader of the group that took possession of the territorial

domain first is the ritual leader. The leader of the group that arrived subsequently and usurped the power of the **mori tana** through warfare is the political leader. Therefore, the former by virtue of primary occupation of land, may be regarded as the older element; and the latter as the younger.

7 Since Arndt's various ethnographic descriptions are not too clear on the issue of whether or not there is a decision involved in making the offerings either to **Nitu** or to the **nitu**, it seems to me that to whom, or rather to which "**nitu**" the offering is made, may be subject to regional variation within Ngadha.

8 These ancestral weapons are handed down in the same manner as the heirlooms, from the principal house of the clan to the principal houses of the clan segments of various levels.

9 As I mentioned in the last chapter, rain is also conceived to be **Déva**'s semen that fertilizes **Nitu**, as well as **Nitu**'s milk that nourishes the plants.

10 See footnote 9.

11 It should be recalled that the **mosa laki** of the confederacy is also the **mosa laki** and **mori tana** of second order of his own descent group. Likewise, the **mori tana** of the confederacy is both **mosa** and **mori tana** of his own clan.

12 Discontinuity here refers to discontinuity of life brought about by the punishments of **Déva** by the means of death, illness, and misfortunes; also, the separation and drawing of boundaries between opponents and the handing out of punishment by the **mosa laki** may be regarded as comparable to **Déva**.

13 See footnote 6.

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